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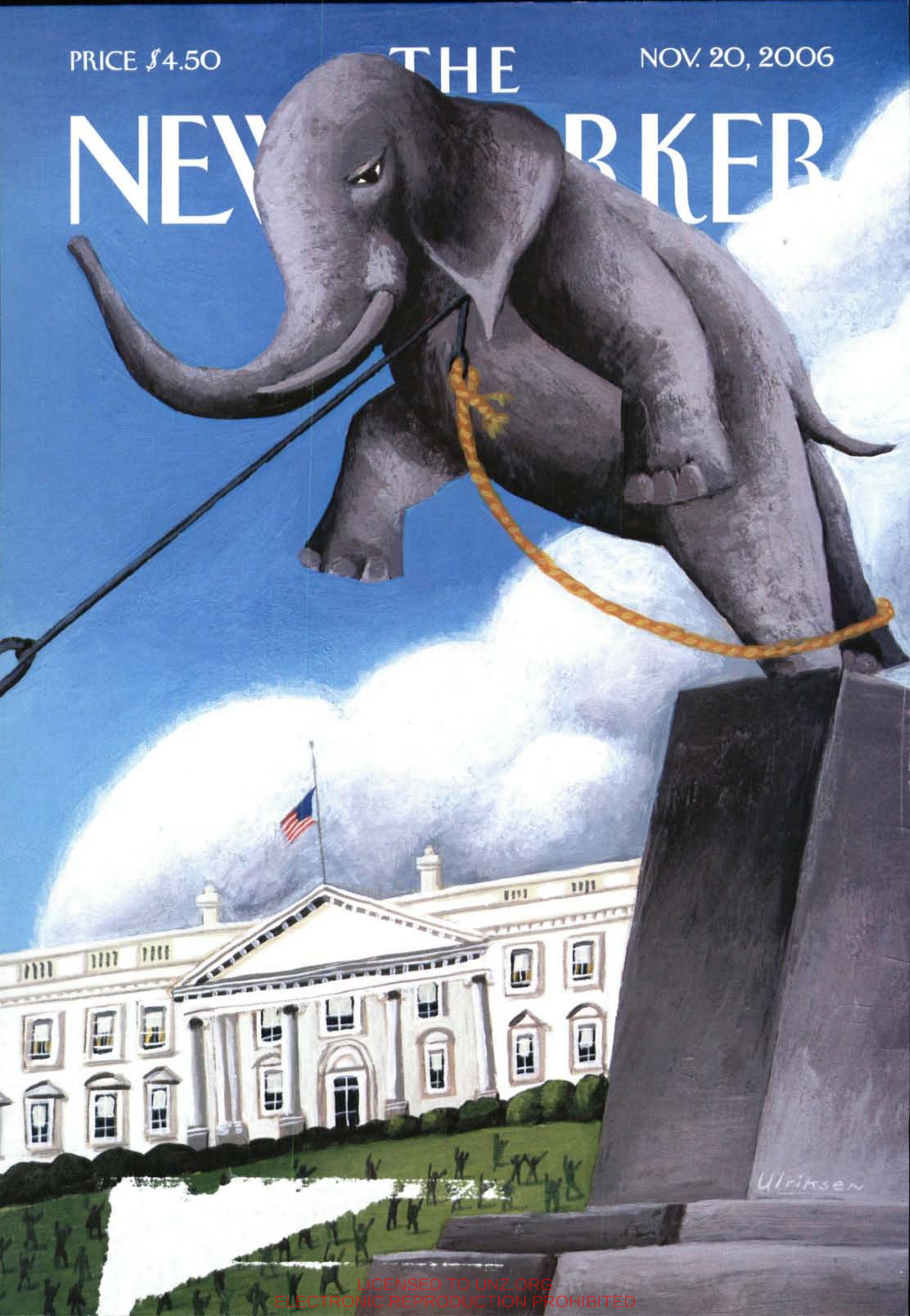
THE NEW YORKER

NOV. 20, 2006



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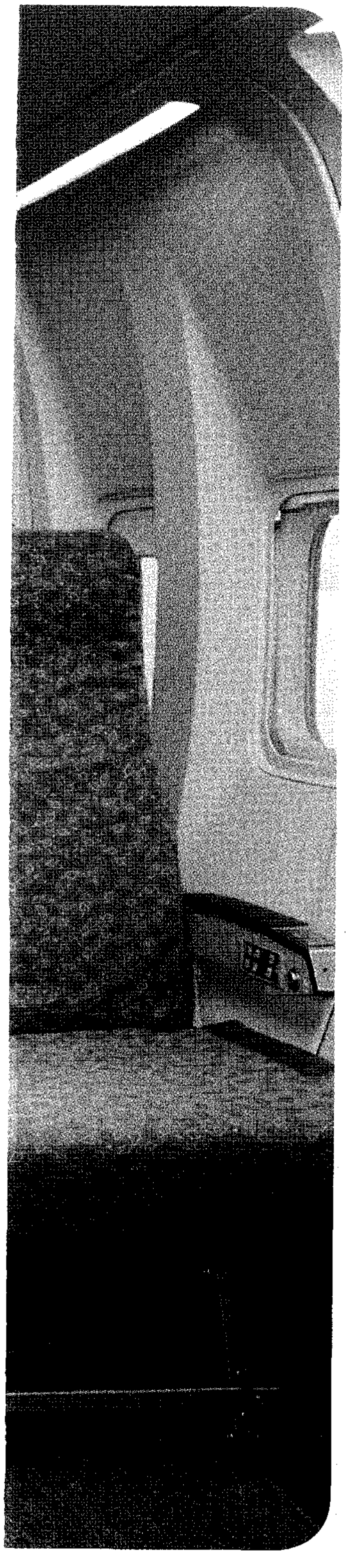

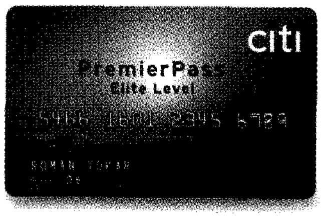

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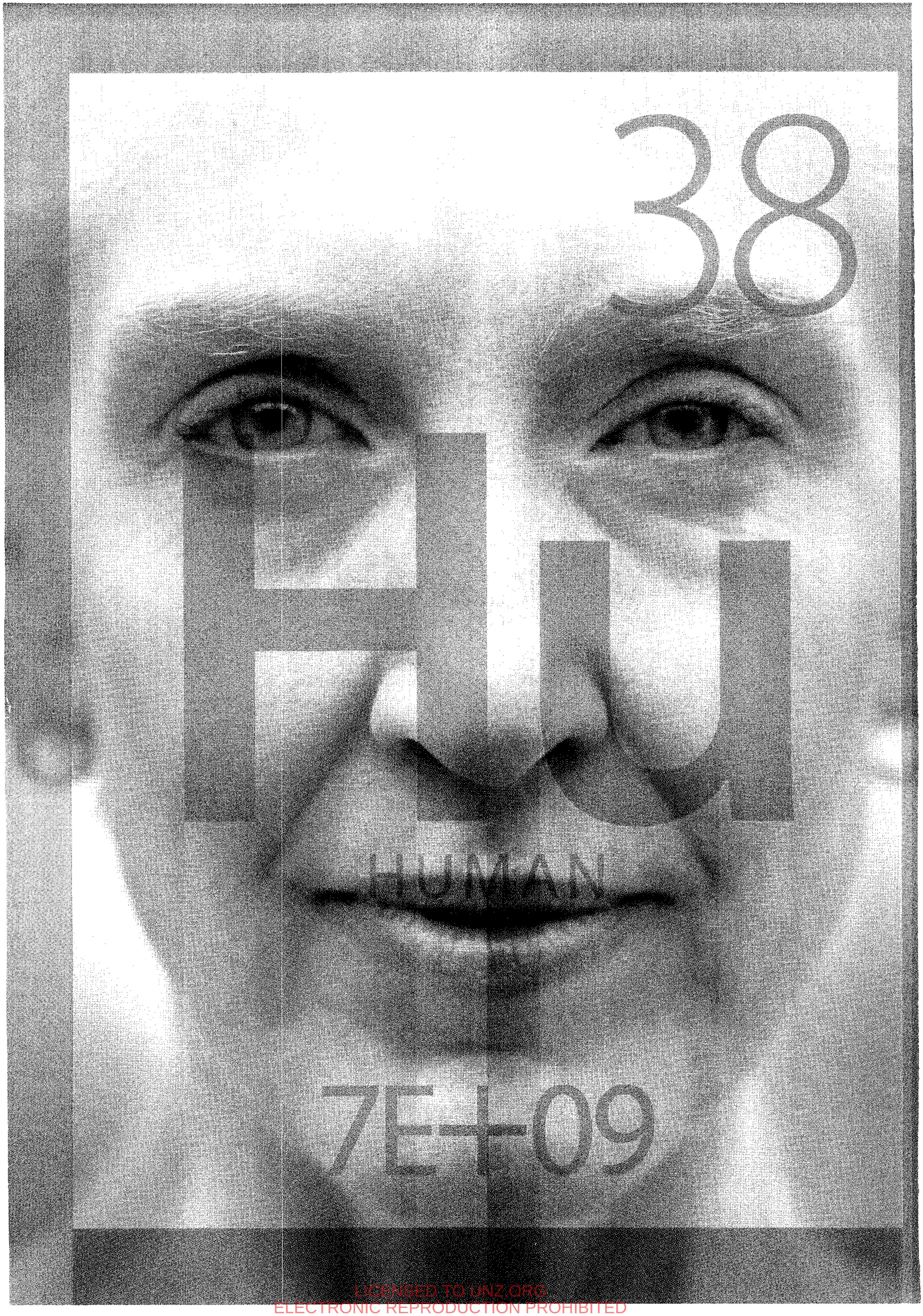
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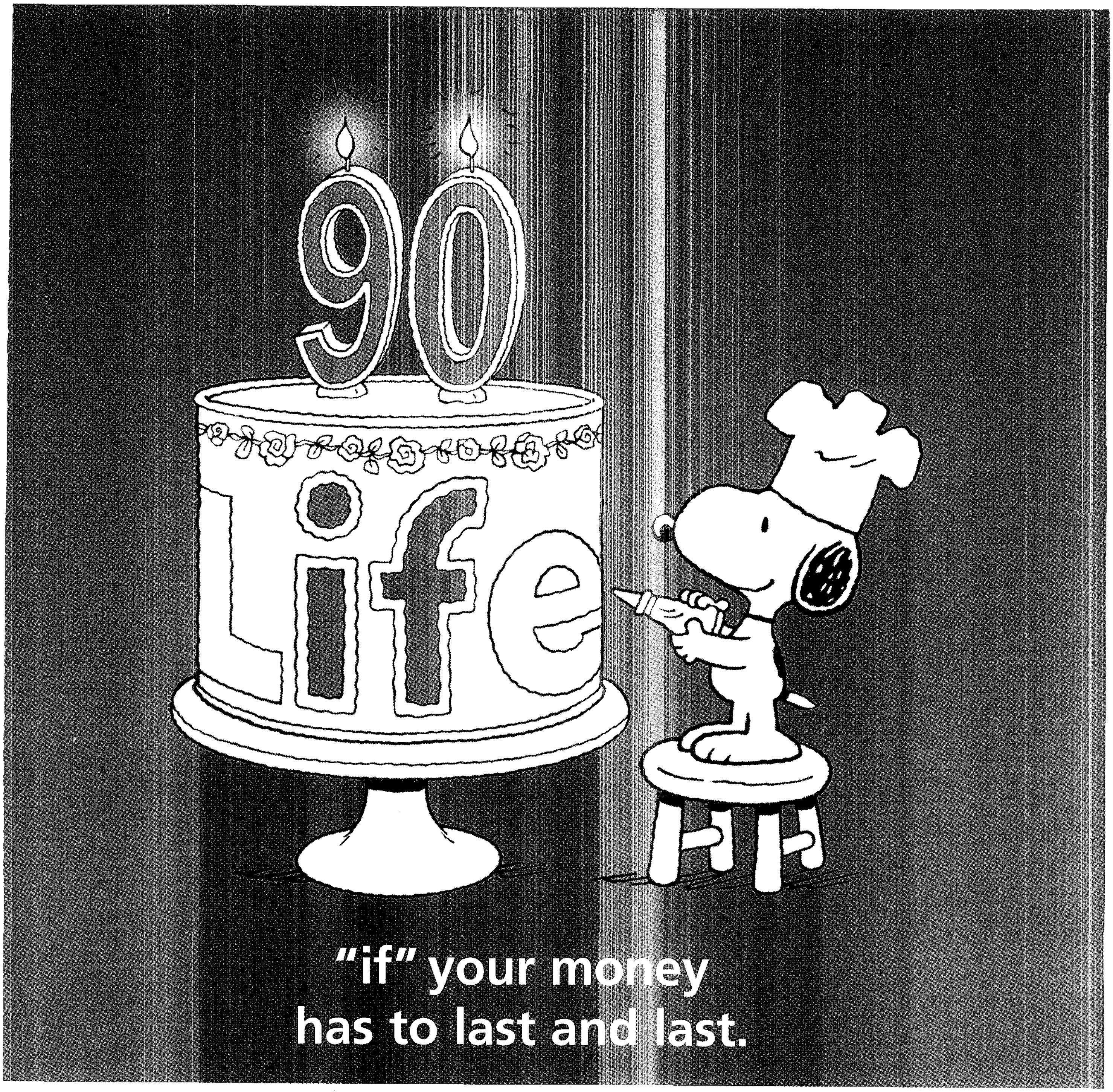

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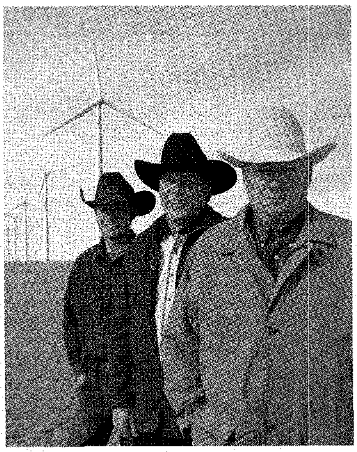
The global community may like wind farms, but what about the local one?



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CONTRIBUTORS

Peter J. Boyer ("Downfall," p. 56) is a staff writer.

Hendrik Hertzberg (Comment, p. 31), a senior editor at the magazine, writes frequently about politics and policy. His book "Politics: Observations & Arguments" is available in paperback.

Jeffrey Goldberg (The Talk of the Town, p. 32) is the author of "Prisoners: A Muslim and a Jew Across the Middle East Divide," which has just been published.

Bill Buford ("Talking Turkey," p. 38) writes about food and drink for the magazine. "Heat," his book about his adventures in restaurant kitchens, came out earlier this year.

William Dalrymple ("Homer in India," p. 48) is a travel writer and historian who has written several books about India. "The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi 1857" will be published in March.

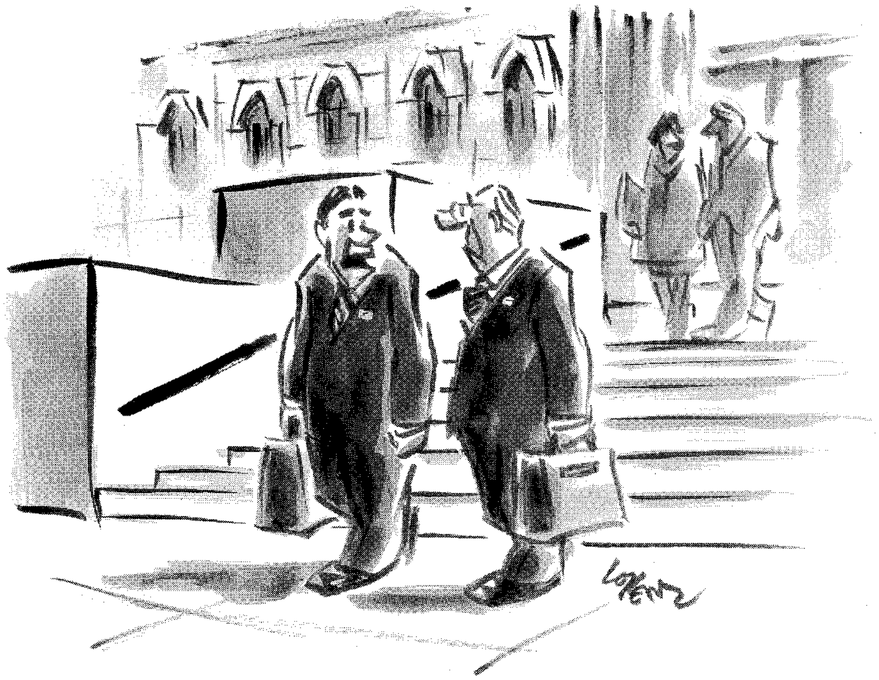
Elizabeth Kolbert ("The Darkening Sea," p. 66) is the author of "Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change."

Franz Wright (Poem, p. 40) received the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for poetry for "Walking to Martha's Vineyard." His most recent collection of poems is "God's Silence."

Marisa Silver (Fiction, p. 76) is the author of a short-story collection, "Babe in Paradise," and a novel, "No Direction Home."

Anthony Gottlieb (Books, p. 86), a former executive editor of *The Economist*, is the author of "The Dream of Reason: A History of Philosophy from the Greeks to the Renaissance." He is writing a book about nothingness.

Mark Ulriksen (Cover) illustrated the children's book "The Biggest Parade," with text by Elizabeth Winthrop, which was published in August. ♦



"It was a complete blowout—I lost my seat, my house, my car, my wife, and my season tickets to the Redskins."

THE MAIL

PHILANTHROPY AND PROFIT

In her description of a “conflict between pure do-gooders and profit-minded do-gooders” in the world of microfinance, Connie Bruck focusses on Pierre Omidyar’s hundred-million-dollar gift to establish the Omidyar-Tufts Microfinance Fund, which is designed to promote the commercialization of microfinance (“Millions for Millions,” October 30th). We believe “conflict” mischaracterizes the tone of the debate. Omidyar’s investment group, Omidyar Network, has disbursed fifty per cent of its microfinance funding to nonprofits, and has been a generous supporter of the Grameen Foundation USA. Grameen Bank, founded by the Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, is a profitable financial institution, and the Grameen Foundation has, with Omidyar Network support, established an active capital-markets group that develops mutually beneficial partnerships between traditional banks and poverty-focussed microfinance institutions. Social impact comes in a variety of forms and vehicles, both for-profit and nonprofit, and both types of capital will play important roles in realizing Omidyar’s goal of “economic self-empowerment” and Yunus’s vision of putting poverty in a museum.

Alex Counts
Founding President, Grameen Foundation USA
Washington, D.C.

Iqbal Paroo
C.E.O., Omidyar Network
Redwood City, Calif.

It is of great significance that, for the first time, capitalism is being used to directly influence the problem of poverty, rather than merely to enrich the owners of capital. What is also clear at this stage in microfinance’s evolution is that there is no one solution that is scalable, sustainable, and successful at serving the poor at all levels. This is why it is critical to continue backing both poverty-focussed visionaries like Yunus and profit-minded bankers like Internationale Projekt Consult, with both “soft” and “hard” funds. Yes, we should focus on those institutions which are generating the greatest results and reduce industry dependency on soft funds for recurring costs. But we must also foster continuing experimentation.

Rupert Scofield
Executive Director, FINCA International
Washington, D.C.

The issue of whether or not lending programs for the very poor should also be profitable is a critical one. However, resistance to “commercialized” models of microfinance is often not based on resistance to profit. It’s based on distaste for using loans to very poor people to profit the wealthy. Credit unions provide a useful reference: profits can be distributed among the participants whose labor and savings generate the net gain.

Sarah Stookey
Assistant Professor of Management and Organization
Central Connecticut State University
New Britain, Conn.

Clearly, there is a need to commercialize microcredit to satisfy the credit needs of the poor. However, when payday lenders, used-car dealers, or check-cashing outlets in the United States charge the poor ultra-high interest rates, we condemn the practice as “predatory lending.” Is it different when microlenders charge a hundred or a hundred and twenty per cent interest? It was through innovation that the Grameen Bank demonstrated the feasibility of banking with poor people on a country-wide scale. The next challenge is to make microcredit a mainstream business model that is fair both to investors and to clients.

David Bornstein
New York City

•

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The Glimmerglass Opera Series, at the Morgan Library. Photograph by Landon Nordeman.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
19	20	21	15	16	17	18

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
MUSICAL MUSICAL

Nick Hornby's novel "High Fidelity" was adapted by Stephen Frears into a movie starring John Cusack; now it comes to Broadway. Walter Bobbie directs the musical adaptation, which stars Will Chase as Rob, the music snob obsessed with making lists and pondering his romantic failures. (See page 10.)

NIGHT LIFE
SPIDER MAN

The former Soft Boy Robyn Hitchcock recently teamed up with the guitarist Peter Buck, of R.E.M., the bass player Scott McCaughey, formerly of the Fresh Young Fellows, and the ex-Ministry drummer Bill Rieflin to record "Olé! Tarantula," an album of slightly psychedelic jangle-pop songs that cements his reputation as one of music's most surrealistic wits. He brings the band, called the Venus 3, to Hiro Ballroom. (See page 14.)

ART
LAS PINTURAS

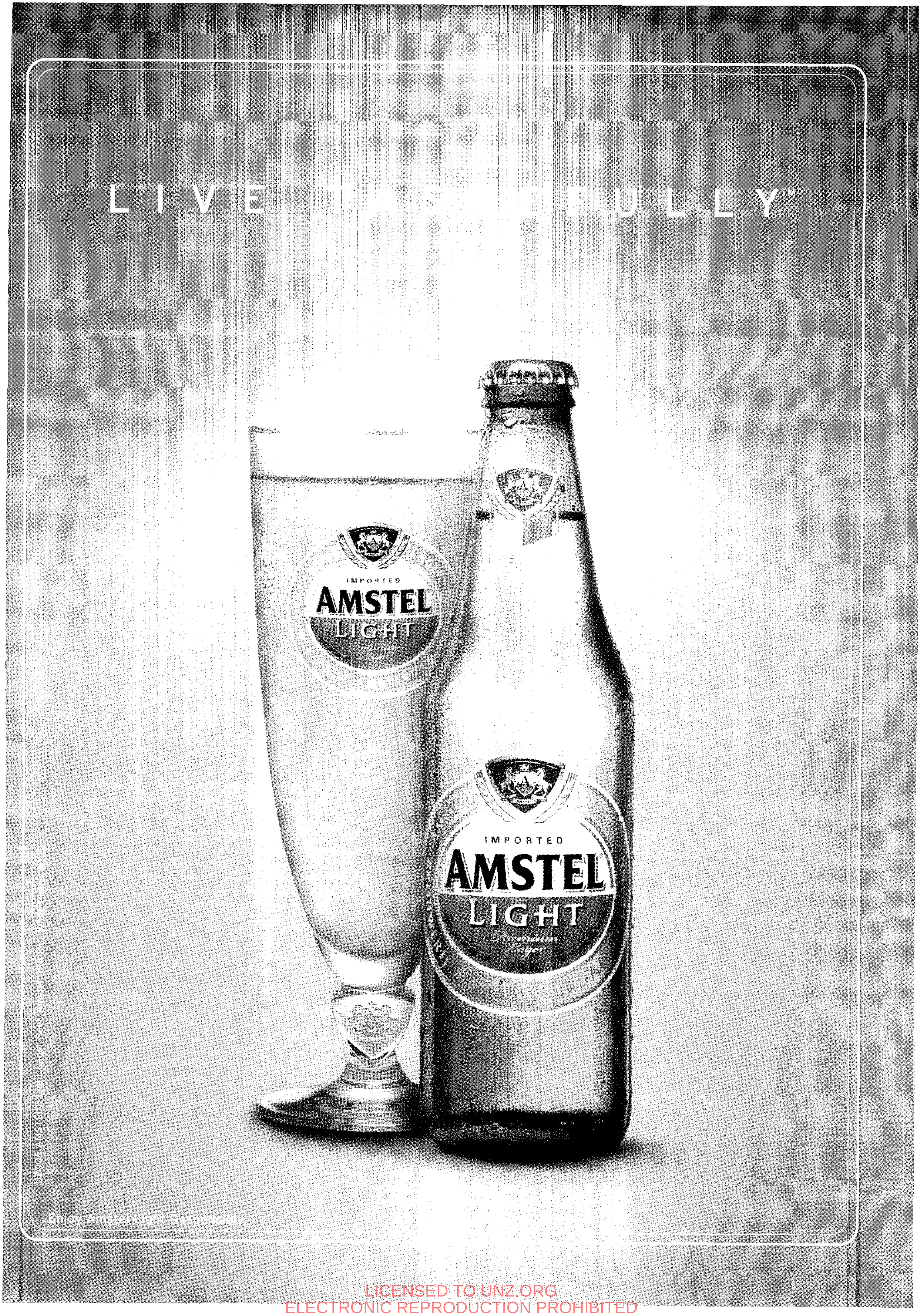
Five centuries of art are surveyed in the Guggenheim's "Spanish Painting from El Greco to Picasso: Time, Truth, and History." The focus here is narrower than in last year's "Russia!" show, and canvases are organized entirely by theme rather than chronologically. Still, the show may produce a similar feeling of sprawl. (See page 16.)

MOVIES
OUR MISS BROOKS

To celebrate the centenary of Louise Brooks (who would have turned a hundred on Nov. 14), Moving Image presents the world première of a new restoration of "Pandora's Box," and Walter Reade offers "Diary of a Lost Girl." These are the two films that she made in Germany under the direction of G. W. Pabst. Both will be introduced by Peter Cowie, author of a new biography of Brooks. (See page 26.)

AUCTIONS
HIGH MODERN

This week, Christie's and Sotheby's battle for dominance of the lucrative postwar and contemporary market; Phillips also gets into the act, concentrating on younger American artists. (See page 28.)



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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

THE AMERICAN PILOT
Manhattan Theatre Club presents the U.S. première of this drama by David Greig, about a pilot who crash-lands in a rural village in a war-torn country. In previews. Opens Nov. 21. (City Center, Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

THE COAST OF UTOPIA, PART ONE: VOYAGE
The first of three plays by Tom Stoppard about a group of nineteenth-century Russian intellectuals. The ensemble cast includes Ethan Hawke, Brían F. O'Byrne, Jennifer Ehle, Billy Crudup, Martha Plimpton, and Amy Irving. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

COMPANY
John Doyle directs the Stephen Sondheim and George Furth Tony Award-winning musical from 1970, in which a bachelor observes the lives of five married couples. In previews. (Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

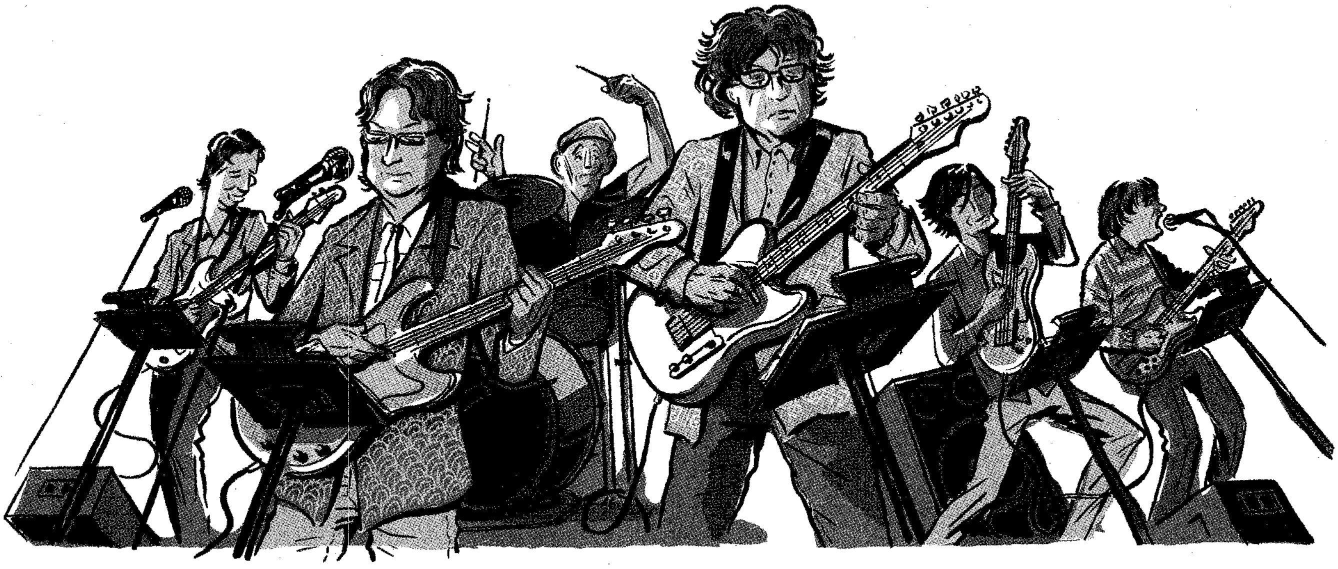
DARK MATTERS
Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa's drama about mystical happenings surrounding a Midwestern family. Trip Cullman directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 20. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

DURANGO
The world première of a new play by Julia Cho, about a Korean father who embarks on a road trip with his teen-age sons. Directed by Chay Yew. In previews. Opens Nov. 20. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

FLOYD AND CLEA UNDER THE WESTERN SKY
David Cale stars as a country singer who travels through the West with a free-spirited young woman, in this new musical. Cale wrote the book and lyrics and co-wrote the music with Jonathan Kreisberg. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

GREAT EXPECTATIONS
Kathleen Chalfant stars in Bathsheba Doran's adaptation of the Dickens classic. Will Pomerantz directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 16. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

HIGH FIDELITY
Walter Bobbie ("Chicago") directs this musical based on Nick Hornby's best-selling novel, about a record-store owner whose girlfriend breaks up with him. Previews begin Nov. 20. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)



The garage-rock band Rackett performs songs that reference everything from Rembrandt to Jägermeister, at Joe's Pub.

PAUL HOPPE

MARY POPPINS
The smash hit from London's West End comes to Broadway. Starring Ashley Brown as Mary Poppins and Gavin Lee as Bert; Richard Eyre directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 16. (New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747.)

REGRETS ONLY
Manhattan Theatre Club presents the première of a new comedy of manners by Paul Rudnick, about the social mores of a set of wealthy Manhattanites. Starring Christine Baranski and George Grizzard. In previews. Opens Nov. 19. (City Center, Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

SCHOOL FOR WIVES
The Pearl presents Molière's drama about a man determined to teach a girl twenty years his junior to be his subservient wife. In previews. Opens Nov. 19. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER
Blythe Danner stars in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Tennessee Williams's psychological drama. Opens Nov. 15. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

LA TEMPÊTE
The Montreal-based troupe 4D Art presents Shakespeare's "The Tempest," directed by Michel Lemieux, Victor Pilon, and Denise Guilbault. In French with English supertitles. Nov. 15 and Nov. 17-18. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100.)

TWO TRAINS RUNNING
Signature Theatre Company continues its August Wilson series with this portrayal of a Pittsburgh diner in 1969. In previews. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

THE VERTICAL HOUR
Julianne Moore stars in the world première of David Hare's play about a young war correspondent turned political-science professor whose beliefs are challenged when she meets her boyfriend's English father (Bill Nighy). Sam Mendes directs. In previews. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE VOYSEY INHERITANCE
Atlantic Theatre Company presents the New York première of David Mamet's adaptation of Harley Granville-Barker's classic play, about a family whose patriarch has earned their money by embezzlement. In previews. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

WOYZECK
The U.S. première of the Gate Theatre London's production of Georg Büchner's drama about a soldier's spiral into madness. Adapted and directed by Daniel Kramer. In previews. Opens Nov. 16. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St. 718-254-8779.)

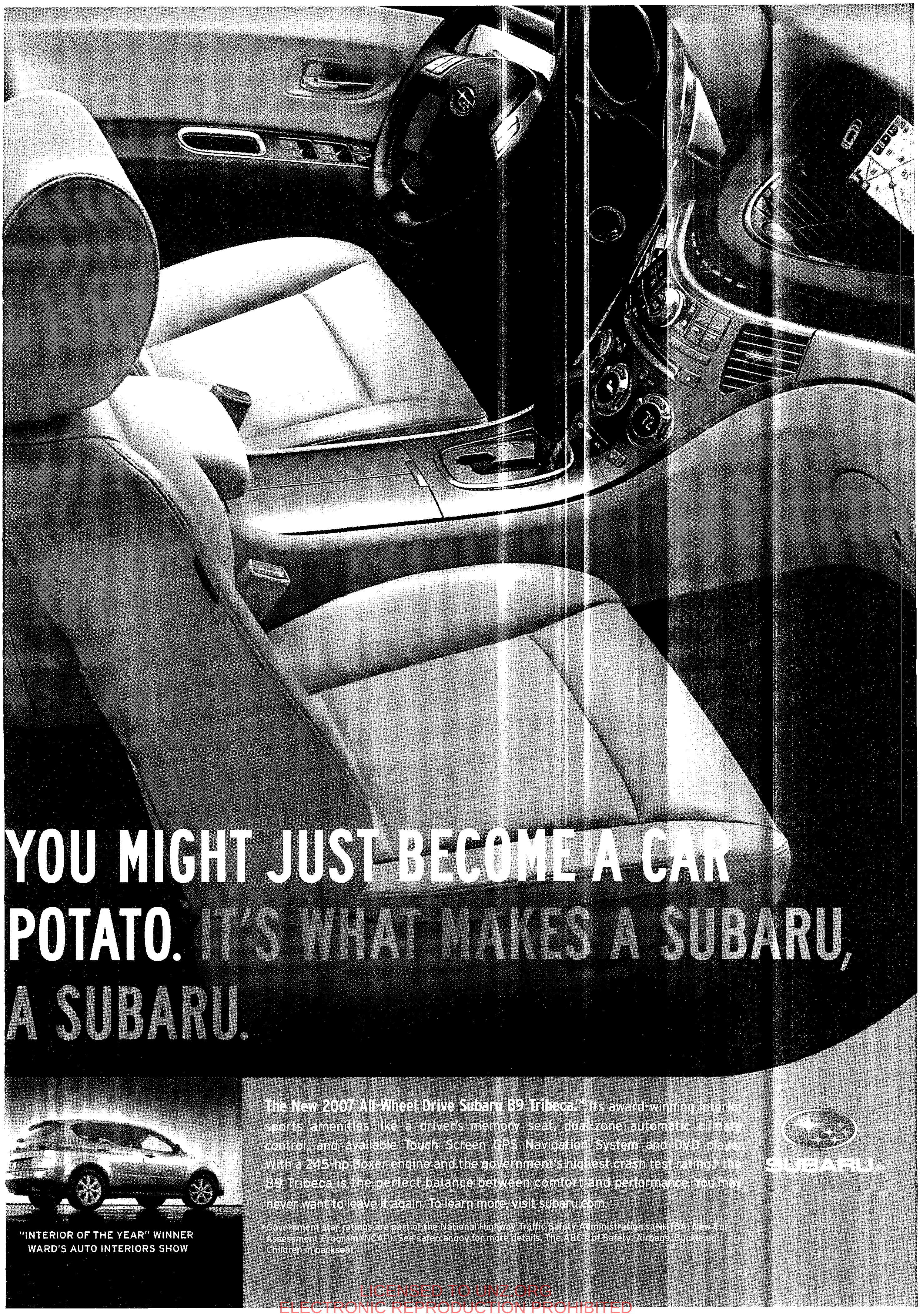
NOW PLAYING

ALL THE WAY HOME
Jack Cummings III directs a sepia-tinted revival of the play by Tad Mosel (based on a novel by James Agee), from 1960. Set in Knoxville in 1915, this multigenerational family drama concerns the death of a young father, Jay Follet (the charismatic Patrick Boll), who's struggled with alcohol and mostly won his battle. Onstage, it's clear that Jay adores his little son, Rufus (Chandler Frantz), but feels a certain tender distance from his pregnant wife, Mary (Monica Russell). Jay's sudden demise in a roadside accident leaves his family stunned with grief. Cummings's staging is slow-paced but richly imagistic, and a live harmonica player adds a superbly orchestrated specificity to the country setting. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-352-3101. Through Nov. 18.)

THE CLEAN HOUSE
In the MacArthur-winning playwright Sarah Ruhl's dramatic comedy (under the direction of Bill Rauch), the play's central character, a maid named Matilde (Vanessa Aspillaga), is from Brazil. Her overachieving employer, Lane (Blair Brown), a busy, childless doctor, married to a surgeon, Charles (John Dossett), bristles with discontent, and Lane's sister, Virginia (Jill Clayburgh, who seems uneasy in her underwritten role), is a compulsive cleaner. Ruhl may poke fun at the trope of the Latina as invisible housecleaner, but she doesn't actually try to go any deeper. Ruhl ends up performing her own version of literary typecasting, conveying a lazy romanticism about the proletariat, for whom she seems to have no real feeling at all. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/13/06.) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

DR. SEUSS' HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS!—THE MUSICAL
For those who thought the Jim Carrey "Grinch" movie needed a dose of Ritalin, here is a subdued version of the holiday tale, with music by Mel Marvin and book and lyrics by Timothy Mason. Handsomely wrapped and faithful to the book, the production is as attractive as a window display at Saks. But it doesn't have any garlic in its soul, and what's missing is the mischievousness that Carrey brought to the part. (Here, Patrick Page plays the title character as a fey Brit, the go-to choice for softie villains.) Still, Christmas-weary parents will likely appreciate the stage show's charm and restraint. (Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.)

GREY GARDENS
Christine Ebersole still astounds in her dual role in the Broadway transfer of the musical based on the Maysles brothers' classic 1975 documen-



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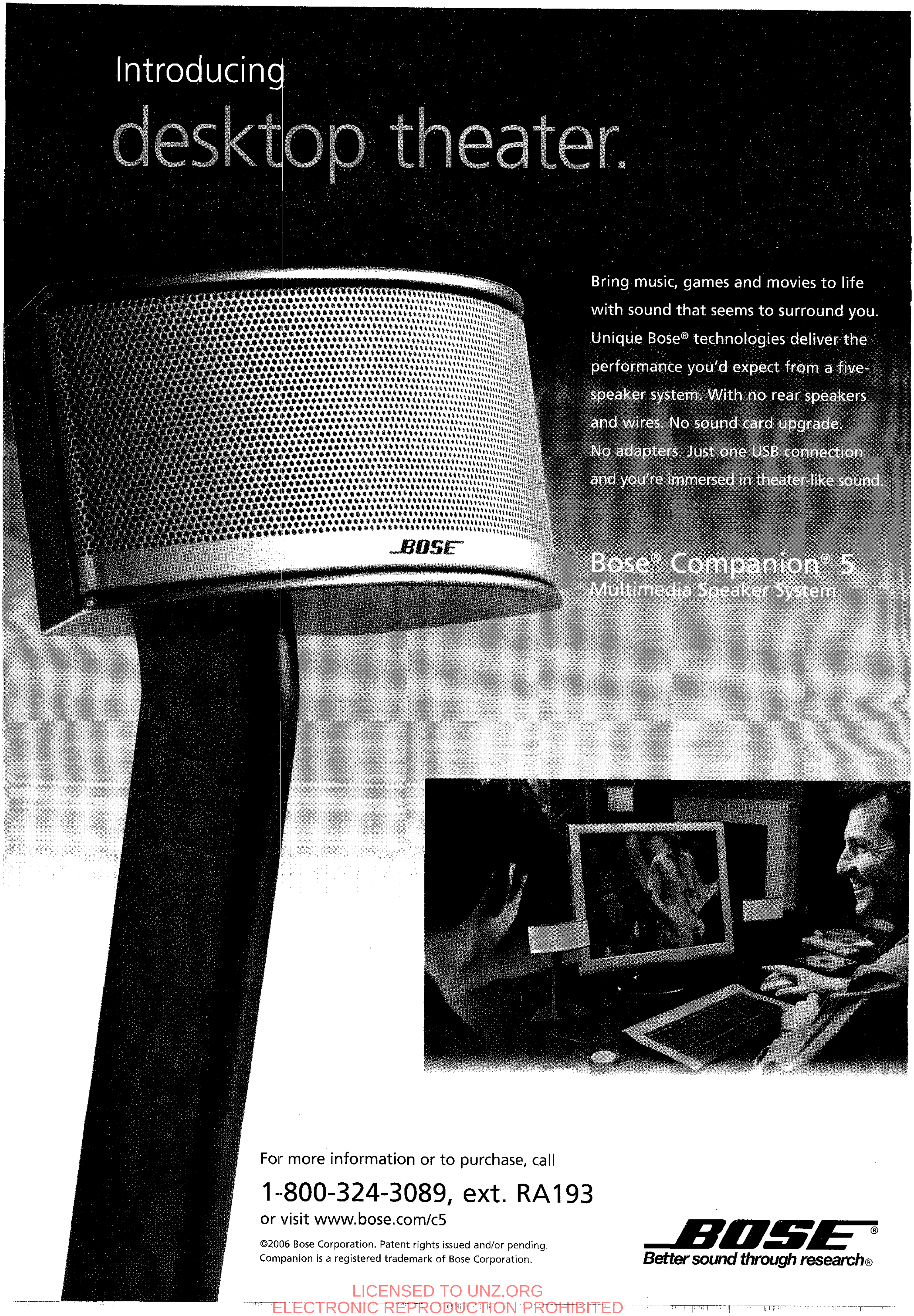

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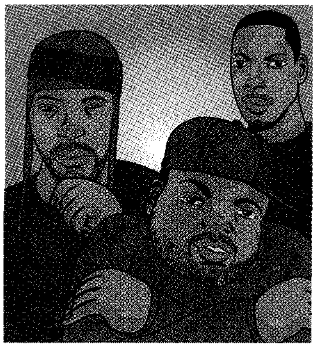
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
TRIPLE THREAT

Redman, Keith Murray, and Raekwon—who will all perform at B. B. King's on Nov. 28—are m.c.s who experienced their commercial peaks in the mid-nineties. All three are distant from rap's current taste for tales of conspicuous consumption told over twinkly, clean keyboards. They dress in low-key street wear, specialize in dense wordplay, and put words against beats made from samples of old soul records. Both Murray—whose name is not even an alias—and Redman are punch-line m.c.s, fond of goofing off and being heard clearly. A veteran of movies and TV, Redman is a journeyman, dependably funny but rarely cited as one of the greats. (His experience on movie sets suggests he may buck another common hip-hop trend and show up on time.) Raekwon is a member of the semi-defunct Wu-Tang Clan, and, though he sometimes raps about scrapes with the law, his forte is inventing obscure, proprietary slang and breaking the metre of a line into small chunks. He's a writerly m.c., an anomaly in the current climate. So is a hip-hop set with three good m.c.s in a row.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*



MAXIMILIAN BODE

tary about two individualistic hermits, Edith Bouvier Beale and her daughter, Little Edie, who also happened to be the aunt and cousin of the late Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. Changes to songs in both the first act, which portrays the Beales' better days, and the second, a takeoff on the era of the documentary, have minimal over-all effect—the first half is still a bit of a fusty bore, and the second half still suffers from odd, uninspired ghost sequences. But Erin Davie, as Young Little Edie, livens up the role with spunk and a proper accent, and Ebersole's uncanny incarnation of Little Edie in the second half, along with the new, tragic ending, resonates well after the curtain goes down. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED
The Off Broadway hit play by Douglas Carter Beane, about a closeted movie star and his overzealous agent, moves to Broadway. Starring Julie White, Tom Everett Scott, and Johnny Galecki. Scott Ellis directs. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

MIMI LE DUCK
In Diana Hansen-Young and Brian Feinstein's confused new musical (directed by Thomas Caruso), a Midwestern painter of mallard ducks (Annie Golden) flees her Mormon marriage for a theme-park gay Paree. There—inexplicably—her bohemian friends (a cross-dressing oyster shucker, a night-club owner, a phallus sculptor) urge her back into the arms of her dreary husband. Tucked in among the Eiffel Tower's legs, the ghost of Ernest Hemingway, and a parade of tinny, routine songs is the still-fabulous Eartha Kitt (as a retired torch singer), whose thrilling stage presence and sly, frisky mind belong to another Paris altogether. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

LES MISÉRABLES
A new production of the musical based on Victor Hugo's epic, set in nineteenth-century France. John Caird directs. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

MY DEAH
John Epperson, better known as the drag star Lypsinka, applies his custom blend of mascara and venom to Euripides in this frolicsome adaptation of "Medea." Recast here as a former Miss Louisiana State turned catty Mississippi belle, My Deah (Nancy Opel, a marvel of comedic stamina) unleashes a well of unholy wrath on the man who done her wrong (Maxwell Caulfield) and his trophy girlfriend (Lori Gardner), employing her dainty bridge partners—all played by men—as pawns. Amazingly, "My Deah" isn't camp. It falls under a less subversive category: pure screwball, born and bred on gags. (Abingdon, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.)

STRIKING 12
A musical created and performed by the pop band GrooveLily, about a man who is lured out of his shell by a salesgirl on New Year's Eve. Ted Sperling directs. (Daryl Roth, 101 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

Also Playing

ARMS AND THE MAN: Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802. **BHUTAN:** Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200. **BUTLEY:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **A CHORUS LINE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **EMERGENCE-SEE!:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Through Nov. 19. **EVIL DEAD THE MUSICAL:** New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT:** 47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **THE HAIRY APE:** Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. **HEARTBREAK HOUSE:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. **LOSING LOUIE:** Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **MARTIN SHORT: FAME BECOMES ME:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **NO CHILD . . . :** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **THE WEDDING SINGER:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **WRECKS:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Through Nov. 19.

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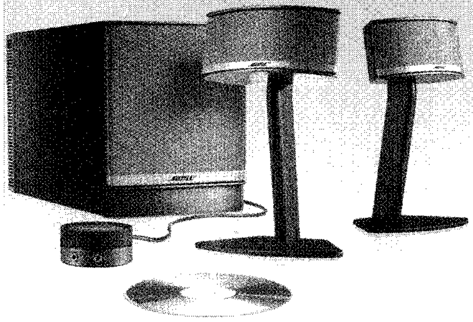

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TABLES FOR TWO
ZUCCO: LE FRENCH DINER

188 Orchard St., near Houston St. (212-677-5200)—Don't despair if, in looking through the windows of this tiny restaurant on the Lower East Side, it appears completely full. Zucco, the wiry and goateed owner, might size you up (girth plays a factor) and ask a couple at the bar to slide over and open up a space. There's room here for about twenty (there are three small tables), and the tight quarters force a sense of camaraderie: anytime a guest needs to walk toward the back, to the rest room, patrons along the bar cheerfully lean forward to make way.

But it's more than just the lack of space that makes the place feel so intimate—it's the charming clutter of Parisian signs and Polaroids of hip-looking young men and women stuck in the chandelier and in the corners of mirrors hung on the wall; the agreeably dim lighting; and the music playing just a little too loud, as if your bratty teen-age brother had taken control of the family stereo. And of course there is Zucco himself, who might shake his finger chidingly at a late dinner companion and who greets his regulars with a kiss on the cheek.

The menu leans heavily on Continental comfort food—steak with peppercorn sauce; the "French burger baguette," with crisp fries; a croque monsieur—but is also wide-ranging, with a simple and rich *gratinée à l'oignon* (French onion soup) on the same page as the "cassoulet de Castelnaudary," which features duck confit, two types of sausage, and beans. Perhaps the most theatrical are the *moules du jour,* which are poured with a clatter into a generous white bowl and offered up steaming.

Most things, though, tend to the *petit,* including the wine, which is served in half-size wineglasses and priced accordingly. It can be hard for some to adjust: one recent evening, a neighboring diner was asked to evaluate the lamb chop he was eating. "It's very tasty," he said, but added, casting a nervous glance at Zucco across the bar and lowering his voice, "It's kind of small." Somehow, it seems unlikely that Zucco would be offended. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $7.50-$19.50.)

—*Andrea Thompson*

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Nov. 15: **Shemekia Copeland** may be the daughter of the guitar legend Johnny Copeland, but she's a powerhouse singer in her own right. Nov. 16: The Western swing of **Asleep at the Wheel.**

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—Nov. 18: The whip-smart acoustic warrior **Ani DiFranco.** With **Hamell on Trial.** Nov. 20: The accomplished, if slightly glib, piano whiz kid **Ben Folds.** Nov. 21-22: An icon of composition whose contributions to the American songbook rank alongside those of Copland, Gershwin, and Bernstein, **Brian Wilson** celebrates the fortieth anniversary of his Beach Boys masterpiece, "Pet Sounds," with a concert performance that will include an appearance by Al Jardine.

CANAL ROOM
285 West Broadway (212-941-8100)—Nov. 17: Britain's **Lloyd Cole** made a polite splash in the mid-eighties with his band the Commotions. Their album "Rattlesnakes" sizzled with wry, sophisticated rock but never really resulted in commercial success. His current solo work—notably the new album, "Antidepressant"—remains as unflinchingly introspective as ever.

HIRO BALLROOM
The Maritime Hotel, 371 W. 16th St. (866-468-7619)—Nov. 17: British humor and weirdness coalesce in the performances of **Robyn Hitchcock,** whose fine new album is titled "Olé! Tarantula."

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)— Nov. 15: The scrappy acoustic madmen of the **Asylum Street Spankers.** Nov. 16: The local favorites **Botanica** perform songs from their latest album, "Berlin Hi-Fi," which is rife with smoky, noirish rock. With **Edison Woods.** Led by Julia Frodahl, a singer with a breathy, lithe delivery, this local ensemble crafts melodramatic chamber pop with a spooky edge. Nov. 17: **Bethany & Rufus** is the vocalist and guitarist Bethany Yarrow, the daughter of the folk legend Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul and Mary, and Rufus Cappadocia, a cellist who's played with Aretha Franklin, Odetta, and Vernon Reid, among many others. She has a husky voice, and he plays a five-string electric cello; together they update traditional, gospel, and folk classics with jazz, funk, blues, and soul inflections. Nov. 19: The New York-based outfit **Ethel** has the appearance of a string quartet and the spirit of a rock band. Founded eight years ago by Juilliard-trained musicians, Ethel recently toured with Joe Jackson and Todd Rundgren, and it just released its second album, "Light," on Bang on a Can's Canteloupe Music label. This appearance is part of the Ethel Lab Series, in which various artists join the group. Nov. 21: **Rackett,** perhaps the only garage-rock band in the world with a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, Paul Muldoon, as a member.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Nov. 15: The **Heartless Bastards** are a trio from Ohio who excise Midwestern ennui with intense, pared-down blues rock. Nov. 16: The beguiling Swedish vocalist Sarah Assbring sings pop confections about loneliness, melancholy, and desperation under the name **El Perro del Mar.** Nov. 17-18: The indie-folk-pop group **Centro-Matic.**

MERKIN CONCERT HALL
129 W. 67th St. (212-501-3330)—Nov. 16: The singer, songwriter, and classically trained violinist **Christina Courtin** has a voice that evokes comparisons to Joplin and Björk. This show celebrates the release of a self-titled E.P., and she'll be playing with a large cast that includes her usual trio, Running Kicks, along with the pianist Steven Beck and the string quartet Brooklyn Rider. Also on the bill is the Montreal post-rock chamber ensemble **Bell Orchestre,** a quintet that shares members with the experimental indie-rock sensation the Arcade Fire.

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-0505)—Nov. 16: The **Twilight Singers,** which is led by Greg Dulli, of the late Cincinnati white-boy

funk combo the Afghan Whigs, gets assistance from the ex-Screaming Trees front man, Mark Lanegan. Nov. 17: **Ben Folds** (see the Beacon Theatre).

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Nov. 17: When the wildly successful pop-punk trio Blink-182 split up, its lead singer, Tom DeLonge, formed the group Angels and Airwaves to work out his U2 fixation, and the remaining members, the bassist Mark Hoppus and the drummer Travis Barker, created **+44**, which retains Blink's brand of energetic pop punk but abandons the juvenile edge that made them famous.

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
In the early sixties, the Friends of Old Time Music brought north a number of notable Southern musicians, including **Doc Watson**, who played his first New York concert under its aegis, in 1962. On Nov. 18, the eighty-three-year-old flat-picking legend joins the **New Lost City Ramblers, John Sebastian, Alvin Youngblood Hart,** and others for a show capping a daylong celebration of F.O.T.M. (see Readings and Talks). (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. For more information, call 212-545-7536.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Starting Nov. 14: The vocalist **Andrea Marcovicci** invokes the spirit of Hildegarde, the larger-than-life, if now little-remembered, queen of American night life.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Nov. 14-18: The **Yellowjackets,** those grand old men of smooth jazz.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—The master pianist **Chick Corea** has never been afraid of revisiting earlier triumphs. His Leprechaun band (here Nov. 14-19) mixes old and new faces in hopes of injecting fresh blood into material from such seventies signposts as "The Leprechaun," "My Spanish Heart," and "The Mad Hatter."

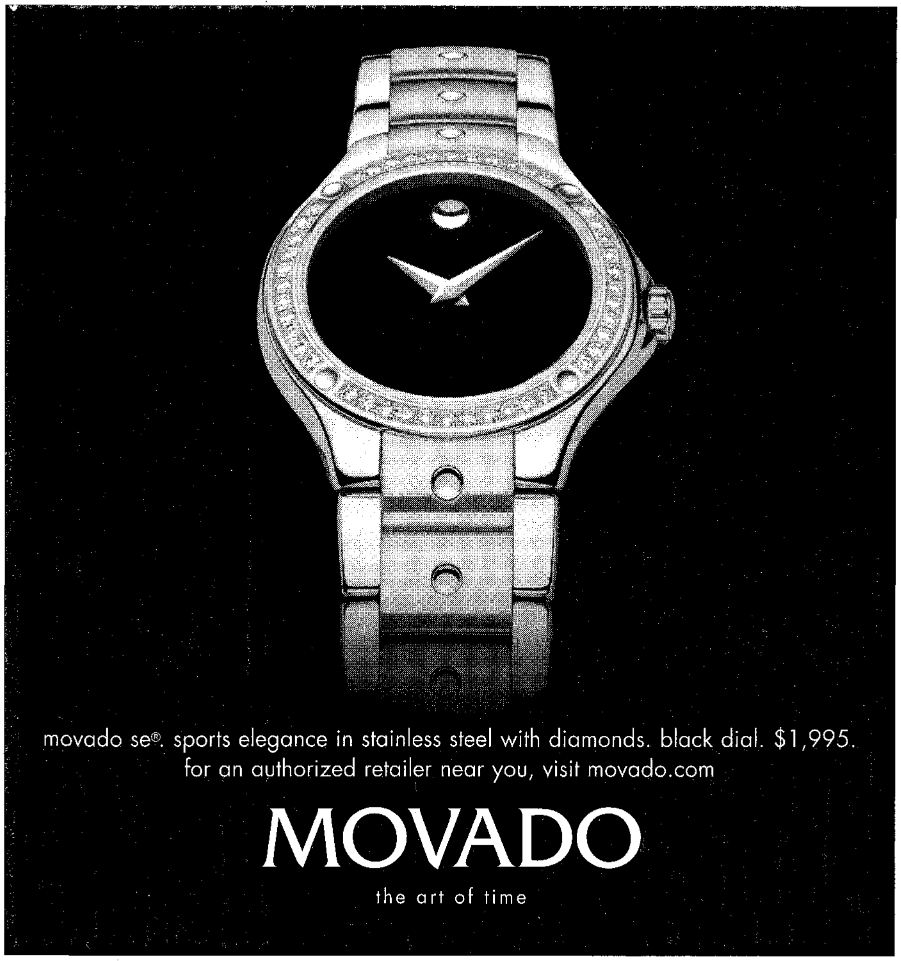
CARNEGIE HALL
57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—Nov. 18: The vocalist **Barbara Cook** delves into songs by a few of her favorite composers, including Stephen Sondheim, Leonard Bernstein, and Richard Rodgers.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Nov. 14-19: The **Bobby Hutcherson** quartet. It took Hutcherson to translate the modernist grammar of sixties jazz onto the vibraphone. He's at his best when he glides into the spare, mysterious ruminations he perfected on classics like Eric Dolphy's "Out to Lunch," but he also loves to display his piston-mallet technique on up-tempo chargers.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Nov. 17-19: **José Feliciano.** "Light My Fire" and "Chico and the Man" may be his calling cards, but there's more than oldies nostalgia to this talented singer, guitarist, and Latin-music mainstay. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—Nov. 16-18: The pianist **Marcus Roberts,** who has recorded the music of George Gershwin extensively, joins the **Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra** and the **American Composers Orchestra** to salute the timeless popular composer.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Nov. 15-16: The **Cookers.** Modal-flavored hard bop as played by first-generation practitioners including the saxophonists **Billy Harper** and **James Spaulding,** the trumpeter **Charles Tolliver,** and the pianist **George Cables,** along with the younger acolyte **David Weiss.**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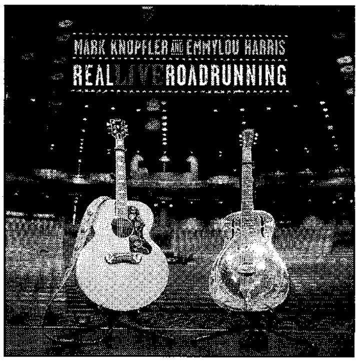

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JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Nov. 16: The vocalist **Nora York** expands her exploration of musical genres with the show "Furtiva Lagrima," a foray into opera.

ROULETTE
20 Greene St., between Canal and Grand Sts. (212-219-8242)—Nov. 16: The violinist, vocalist, and composer **Carla Kihlstedt,** a leader of the trio Two Foot Yard and a founding member of Tin Hat Trio and the Sleepytime Gorilla Museum, eschews the classical for the contemporary.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Nov. 19: The **"Jenny Scheinman Extravaganza"** features a twenty-eight-piece string orchestra. Expect the Brooklyn-based violinist to use the band's lush, expressive palette to full effect. The improvisational powerhouse **Eyvind Kang,** a fellow-violinist, conducts.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Nov. 19: The unimpeachable mainstream jazz of the pianist **Bill Charlap** and his trio. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s"** features work by ten Weimar-era artists, including Otto Dix, George Grosz, and Ludwig Meidner. Opens Nov. 14. ♦ **"New Orleans After the Flood: Photographs by Robert Polidori."** With two exhibitions of large-scale color photographs in town, Polidori proves himself a connoisseur of ruin. At Houk, he shows work made in schools and hospitals that were abandoned after the nuclear meltdown at Chernobyl and later vandalized or damaged by the elements. The Met show is devoted to his pictures from New Orleans, some taken shortly after Katrina flooded the city, some made months later; several appeared in the pages of this magazine. Perhaps because the disaster was closer to home and much of the worst destruction took place in people's houses, the New Orleans photos are both more devastating and more fascinating. Polidori contemplates the spectacular mess—from cars upended on roofs to a bloated mattress spilling its fleshy pink guts—with the gravity and care of a history painter. Through Dec. 10. ♦ **"Americans in Paris, 1860-1900."** Through Jan. 28. ♦ **"Cézanne to Picasso: Ambroise Vollard, Patron of the Avant-Garde."** Through Jan. 7. ♦ **"Sean Scully: Wall of Light."** Through Jan. 15. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Manet and the Execution of Maximilian."** Through Jan. 29. ♦ **"Brice Marden: A Retrospective of Paintings and Drawings."** Through Jan. 15. ♦ **"Projects 83: Monika Sosnowska."** Through Nov. 27. ♦ **"OMA in Beijing: China Central Television Headquarters by Ole Scheeren and Rem Koolhaas."** Models, renderings, and related drawings track plans for an innovative complex of buildings, scheduled to open by the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Opens Nov. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Spanish Painting from El Greco to Picasso: Time, Truth, and History."** Opens Nov. 17. ♦ **"Lucio Fontana: Venice/New York."** Two bodies of work by the Italian artist (1899-1968) best known for his slashed canvases. Through Jan. 21. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Kiki Smith: A Gathering."** Opens Nov. 16. ♦ **"Albers and Moholy-Nagy: From the Bauhaus to the New World."**

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
MOTHER LOVE

The Atlanta-born, L.A.-based photographer Tierney Gearon, forty-three, first came to public attention in 2001, when enormous color pictures of her children in various states of undress were shown at London's Saatchi gallery. In the ruckus that ensued, Gearon was threatened with arrest as a child pornographer, but much of the British press came to her defense and charges were never brought. Although her children continue to animate many of the photos in Gearon's current exhibition at Yossi Milo gallery, the focus has shifted to her schizophrenic mother, so the nudity on display is considerably more mature and the content a lot more volatile. With her thrift-store dresses and wild white mane, Mom is as engagingly eccentric as the gals from Grey Gardens, but her high spirits are always on the edge of mania. In several photographs, she seems to taunt her daughter with flashes of naked, sagging flesh; in others, the nudity is shared, like a fragile gift. Along with Gearon's game but wary kids, we're witnessing a mother-daughter bonding ritual that would seem terribly reckless were it not so heartbreaking and hilarious.

—*Vince Aletti*

Through Jan. 21. ♦ **"Picasso and American Art."** Through Jan. 28. ♦ **Mark Grotjahn's** large-scale works in pencil toy with geometry and multiple vanishing points; he ventures into color with a pair of drawings in saturated reds and yellows that anchor the room. Through Jan. 7. ♦ Works by Edward Hopper fill the fifth floor, including "Nighthawks," on loan from the Art Institute of Chicago. Through Dec. 3. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Annie Leibovitz: A Photographer's Life, 1990-2005."** Through Jan. 21. ♦ **"Tigers of Wrath: Watercolors by Walton Ford"** is a hit. The satirical thrust (protesting human depredations of nature) and archaism (extending to ostensibly age-spotted paper) of Ford's huge, Audubon-style wildlife pictures can seem strained when they are viewed one by one. But the fifty of them here generate a rolling charge of antic emotion and voracious intellect. Ford's comprehension of his subjects—exotic species and the nineteenth-century men who sentimentalized and destroyed them—is wide-ranging, profound, and darkly hilarious. Rumbling throughout is an Oedipal agon with Audubon, whom Ford has called "a total dick and not even that good an artist" but whose baleful genius he vivifies. Through Jan. 28. ♦ **"Ron Mueck"** is a show—or is it a sideshow?—of ten diminutive or colossal, super-veristic figure sculptures by the Australian-born Londoner. It includes a nine-foot, naked, hirsute, bug-eyed bloke; an old guy's small, naked, supine corpse; and the eight-foot head of a newborn baby. The artist, formerly a professional toy- and model-maker, says of his works, "If they succeed as fun things to have in the room, I'm happy." His idea of fun is part "wow!" and part "yuck!" It is over in seconds. What remains is academic craft and—as with painted silicone skin that's lifelike in color but dead in poreless texture—tacky artifice. Through Feb. 4. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION

1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Cimabue and Early Italian Devotional Painting."** Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Domenico Tiepolo (1727-1804): A New Testament."** Through Jan. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—Ada Katz (née Ada Del Moro) is the perfect postmodern muse. In **"Alex Katz Paints Ada,"** she appears in nearly fifty years of portraits, attired in little black dresses, swimsuits, and an array of fabulous sunglasses. The show breaks down into sections like "Existential Ada," "Glamour and Leisure," and "Ada, Ada, Ada," in which the artist's wife-model is repeated, clonelike, five or six times across the canvas. Ada is cool, like a Truffaut heroine, and elegantly remote, like Jackie O. The irony is that even though she's a central icon in Katz's oeuvre she remains a cipher. Rendered in Katz's signature flat color and simply drawn shapes, which tease the line between abstraction and representation, she is both Ada Katz *and* a mere painted subject, barely more significant than a tree, a chair, or a fetching, well-painted scarf. Through March 18. ♦ **"Masters of American Comics"** and **"Superheroes: Good and Evil in American Comics."** Through Jan. 28. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 9, and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

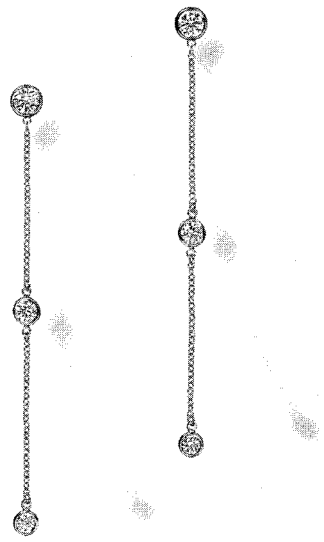
GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

FERNANDO BOTERO

The world has closed in on Botero, the Colombian painter famous for his anachronistic images of happy, chubby figures that hark back to Picasso and George Grosz. First came a series of dark paintings that confronted violence in his country. Now his chunky protagonists appear as characters in the morality play of Abu Ghraib. Using the infamous photographs as starting points, Botero paints the saga like a tale of Chris-

TIERNEY GEARON



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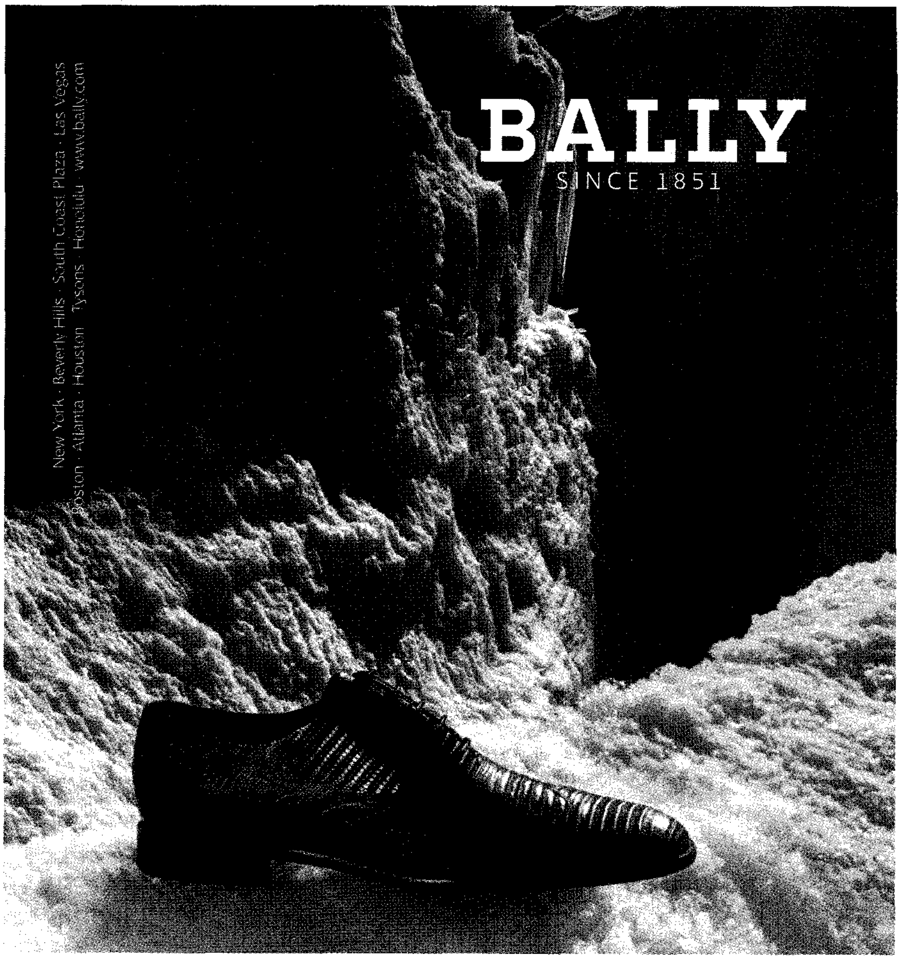
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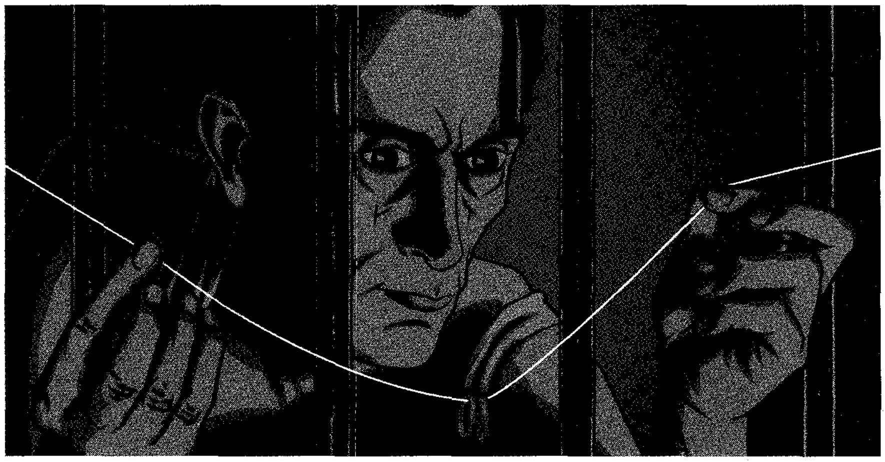
tian martyrdom, with dark colors, sharp prison-cell settings, and the paradoxically bloody-yet-sanitized violence found in myriad Renaissance paintings. Whether painting such scenes in his trademark idiom is something to be commended or condemned depends, perhaps, on one's perspective—as does whether his slightly cartoony images of graphic violence register to the viewer as moving, journalistic, or grotesque. Through Nov. 18. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 212-541-4900.)



Animation and live action are combined in "The Piano Tuner of Earthquakes."

BRIAN EWING

CHARLES H. TRAUB
Traub's great black-and-white photographs from the seventies were made with a lens shade that was a size too small for his camera, so his images of people at the beach or on the street are vignetted as if in a peepshow. This vaguely retro framing device (it mimics the shape of an early TV screen) underlines the work's brutal matter-of-factness and rude intimacy. Traub tends to shove the viewer right up against some woman's sculpted hairdo or a couple's clashing polyester prints, but he also drops back to capture a shadow falling across an empty lot or a concrete patch of Chicago lakefront. Like the work Ray Metzker and John Cohen made in the same period, these tough, canny pictures look even better now. Through Dec. 2. (Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868.)

Short List

OLAF OTTO BECKER: Cohen Amador, 41 E. 57th St. 212-759-6740. Through Dec. 9. **JOHN CURRIN:** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-744-2313. Through Dec. 22. **MARILYN MINTER:** Salon 94, 12 E. 94th St. 646-672-9212. Through Dec. 20. **ROBERT POLIDORI:** Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-750-7070. Through Dec. 23. **FRANZ ROH:** Ubu, 416 E. 59th St. 212-753-4444. Through Dec. 22. **LISA YUSKAVAGE:** Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677. Through Nov. 18.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ENOC PÉREZ
The Seagram Building, the Met Life Building, the U.N., the T.W.A. terminal at J.F.K., the Lever House—New York's International Style monuments loom like celebrities in Pérez's paintings. Composed through a complex process of laying oil paint onto paper and then "printing" it onto canvas, Pérez's works are paradoxically both lush and dry. What looks from across the room like a saturated pink sky or a marine-blue window is revealed up close as barely-there scrapes of pigment. Does this suggest that the cool style is, ultimately, thin? The show doesn't quite say. Through Nov. 25. (Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 536 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400.)

JENNIFER STEINKAMP
Best known for her gorgeous, rotating, fluttering displays of trees and flowers, digitally crafted and suspended in space, here Steinkamp offers two works that head in slightly different directions. One is a two-wall projection that simulates heaving, psychedelic-colored water cresting above viewers' heads; it alludes to a great-uncle who became delirious and died at sea in the Second World War. The other is a four-wall projection of digitized fabric squares, like opulently patterned and textured silk scarves, wafting down from the ceiling. Like nearly all of Steinkamp's efforts, this is a pretty presentation, but it's more like a snack than a meal: quickly absorbed and lacking in greater substance. Through Nov. 25. (Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923.)

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO
With this new body of work, Sugimoto again pares his images to the bone, all but removing subject matter in order to focus on the subtle play of shadow and light. Photographing changing light on the bare white walls of his Tokyo studio, he's produced geometric abstractions that are at once sumptuous and austere: imagine James Turrell working without color. But, because Sugimoto prints in color, the pictures aren't just studies in white on white; strips of sandy or rosy gray as faint as a layer of dust delineate ledges, ceilings, and corners in what might be a minimalist installation. With no sense of a floor beneath your feet, you might feel a bit lost in Sugimoto's space but after a while you won't want to leave. Through Dec. 9. (Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St. 212-627-1018.)

Short List

TEIRNEY GEARON: Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370. Through Nov. 25. **ARTURO HERRERA:** Sikkema Jenkins, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262. Through Nov. 25. **ELLSWORTH KELLY:** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St., 523 W. 24th St., and 526 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200. Through Jan. 27. **CORINNE MERCADIER:** Klotz, 511 W. 25th St. 212-741-4764. Through Nov. 18. **CINDY SHERMAN:** Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100. Through Dec. 16. **LISA YUSKAVAGE:** Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through Nov. 18.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

MARTIN PARR
These eye-popping color photos from Parr's new book, "Mexico," won't surprise viewers familiar with the prolific British photographer's broadly satiric take on the modern world. As usual, his focus is on consumerism and taste of a most questionable sort. He swoops low over enormous pink sugar doughnuts, wristwatches featuring Jesus and the Virgin of Guadalupe, garishly decorated pastries, and Day of the Dead sugar skulls visited by bees but steps back for views of camera-toting tourists and a barrier of tires painted red, white, and aqua. Tweaking cultural imperialism, revelling in vernacular cliché, Parr may not be subtle but he's always sharp. Through Nov. 22. (Borden, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-431-0166.)

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

JOYCE PENSATO
Black-and-white was the preferred palette of existentially inclined Abstract Expressionists—Pollock, Franz Kline, de Kooning in the late forties. Pensato, a veteran of Williamsburg (pre-mocha lattes and dot-coms), takes that austere palette, along with the gesture and drips and Ab Ex proclivity for enamel paint, and applies them to big canvases featuring comic figures like Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and Homer Simpson. It's an improbable combination, but Pensato handles it well, creating what are neither bubbly Pop images nor caricatures of the New York School. Instead, she imbues classically goofy figures with a bit of pathos and introspection: Donald and Mickey meet Sartre and Giacometti. Through Nov. 20. (Parker's Box, 193 Grand St. 718-388-2882.)

CARL POPE
Street posters and advertisements don't merely sell stuff; they get inside the brain, shape thoughts, ideologies, identities. Or so one gathers from Pope's first New York solo show, a wall of handcrafted letterpress posters that carry messages like "African-Americans, Negroes, Blacks, and Post-Blacks All Agree: The Use of the 'a' Instead of the 'er' Changes Everything!" and "Venturing Into Blackness is a Lonely Business." Pope takes cues from writers like Ralph Ellison and Ishmael Reed, but his acerbic and funny approach to the politics of race draws comparisons to an even wider range of social forces, from street protests to critical theory. Through Nov. 20. (Momenta, 359 Bedford Ave. 718-218-8058.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The company holds its opening-night benefit—a taste of what's to come in the winter season after five weeks of "Nutcracker" performances—and the current "it boys" of ballet, Alexei Ratmansky (the artistic director of the Bolshoi) and Jorma Elo (the resident choreographer of the Boston Ballet), are back. "Middle Duet," which Ratmansky made for the Kirov, is a clever pas de deux that dismantles the forms of classical ballet. Elo returns with his recent hit for the company, "Slice to Sharp," an assemblage of lightning-fast locomotion and quirky gesture. The program also includes excerpts by Balanchine (from "Stars and Stripes" and "Walpurgisnacht Ballet"), Peter Martins (from "Ecstatic Orange"), and Jerome Robbins (from "N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz"). The company's resident choreographer, Christopher Wheeldon, kicks off the evening with his swooning distillation of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "Carousel." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Nov. 21 at 7:30.)

DAVID DORFMAN DANCE
In the New York première of "Underground," a dance-theatre piece inspired by Dorfman's fascination with the Weather Underground and his self-described "movement roots," the fifty-one-year-old choreographer and his youthful company storm the stage wearing vintage clothes. The practical uses—and the limits—of activist violence are examined through volatile dancing, archival footage of demonstrations, and a physicalized Q. & A. session, in which a reporter figure probes his fellow-dancers' politics. At times Dorfman's movement depicts the uneasiness in the conflicted activist's heart: a clenched fist raised in lunge position, one dancer clutching another's waist as they run in circles. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Nov. 14 and Nov. 16-18 at 7:30.)

LIMÓN DANCE COMPANY
In a trio of sixtieth-anniversary programs, the current generation is guided by former Limón pupils, including the company's artistic director, Carla Maxwell, who re-creates masterworks like "The Moor's Pavane" and "A Choreographic Offering." The alumna Sarah Stackhouse mounts a revival of Doris Humphrey's 1946 "Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías," and Limón's former student Lar Lubovitch is

the choreographer of "Recordare" (2005), a tribute to Limón's Mexican roots. (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. Nov. 14-15 and Nov. 21 at 7:30, Nov. 16-17 at 8, Nov. 18 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 19 at 2 and 7:30. Through Nov. 26.)

BATTERY DANCE COMPANY

Jonathan Hollander's thirty-year-old company offers its home-town audience a new work for six dancers, "I'll Take You There," which draws its inspiration from the sweetness and swagger of the city kids they've worked with over the years. "Secrets of the Paving Stones," an impressionistic portrait of the city of Kraków created as part of the company's Holocaust Memorial Project, is performed to klezmer music and includes a whiff of folk dance. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-219-3910. Nov. 15 at 1 and Nov. 16 at 1 and 8.)

CLAUDE WAMPLER

Wampler, a visual and performance artist who was once a member of a Butoh company, is a boundary-pusher; intrepid and frankly exhibitionistic, she thrives on destabilizing spectators. Famously, she once made love to a motorcycle; another time, she disrupted her own advertised film screening with faked violent accidents and a mock ambulance run. In "~~PERFORMANCE~~ (Career Ender)," an hour-long piece whose chief ingredients include bodies, text, special effects, a central art object, and a recurring pop song, the focus will again be on jolting the audience out of its formal theatregoing habits. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Nov. 16-18 at 7 and 9:30.)

KOTA YAMAZAKI/FLUID HUG-HUG

The work of Fluid Hug-Hug, the Japanese-born choreographer's latest company, reaches from his own Butoh base to incorporate global influences. His "Rise:Rose" grew out of a series of workshops in Senegal, and it is indeed fluid—in its rippling motion, in its combination of elements, in its sense of time. Yamazaki, Mina Nishimura, and the golden boy of New York dance, Paul Matteson, are all stunning movers, pursuing separate ends until the powerful conclusion. The dance has some of Butoh's difficult austerity and some of its revelatory strangeness, both leavened and sharpened by a contrasting kinetic pulse. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Nov. 16-18 at 7:30.)

LIONEL POPKIN

In Popkin's "Miniature Fanstasies," the onetime Trisha Brown dancer joins Carolyn Hall and Jennifer Dignan in an intriguing trio, presented by Danspace Project. Wielding slide projectors, the three cast images of seventeenth-century Indian miniature paintings onto the walls, onto each other, and onto themselves. Though they make full use of the space, their bodies are often pressed together, back to belly, standing or recumbent. The open-form choreography is flecked with engaging moments: a nose may nuzzle a foot. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Nov. 16-19 at 8:30.)

"WORKS & PROCESS"

The Guggenheim hosts a conversation between Wes Chapman, a former American Ballet Theatre principal dancer who recently returned to the company as a ballet master, Franco De Vita (the principal of the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School at A.B.T.), Gage Bush Englund (the ballet mistress of the A.B.T. Studio Company), and Kirk Peterson (the Studio Company's artistic director) on the subject of growing up in tights. Students from the school and members of the Studio Company will perform. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. Nov. 19-20 at 7:30.)

JENNIFER MULLER/THE WORKS

"Passion Fruit," Muller's contribution to Latin American Cultural Week, takes the tango as inspiration. Borrowing Argentine steps, attitude, and music (played live by the pianist Polly Ferman and the renowned bandoneón master Daniel Binelli), Muller throws together some stock characters (the Clingy Girl, the Wolf), pairs them up, and sees which couples survive the evening. A study in the varieties of passion, the dance aspires to match the urgency of the music with teeming action and Muller's melodramatic brand of emoting. (DiCapo Theatre, 184 E. 76th St. 212-691-3803. Nov. 20 at 8.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

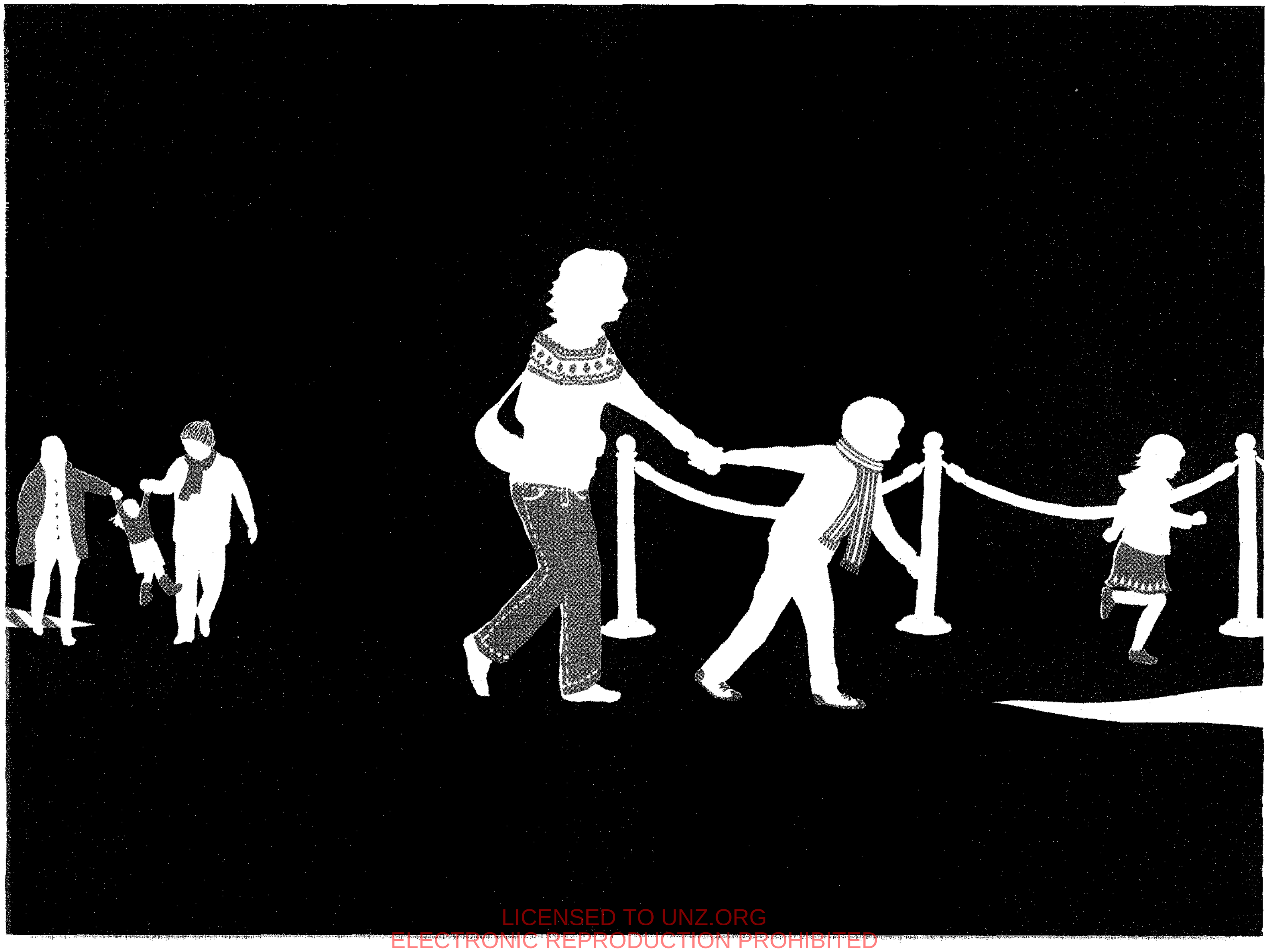
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

Anthony Minghella's unmissable production of **"Madama Butterfly"** is awesome, deliberate, and artfully romantic—no surprise to fans of his films. The final performances feature the production's original stars, Cristina Gallardo-Domâs and Marcello Giordani; Asher Fisch conducts. (Nov. 15 at 7:30 and Nov. 18 at 8.) ♦ Juan Diego Flórez, the most glamorous Rossini tenor before the public, returns to the house to sing the role of Almaviva in **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia"** in a heavily promoted new production by the Broadway director Bartlett Sher. His formidable colleagues include Diana Damrau (Rosina) and Peter Mattei (Figaro); Maurizio Benini. (Nov. 16 and Nov. 20 at 7:30.) ♦ The gloriously archaic Zeffirelli production of **"Tosca,"** with Andrea Gruber, Vincenzo La Scola, and James Morris; Nicola Luisotti. (Nov. 17 at 8.) ♦ **"La Bohème,"** with Angela Marambio, Susannah Glanville, Rolando Villazón, and Peter Coleman-Wright in the leading roles; Plácido Domingo, making one of his occasional moves from stage to podium, conducts. (Nov. 18 at 1:30 and Nov. 21 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

Strong singing shines through Tim Albery's highly conceptual production of **"Così Fan Tutte,"** Mozart's perpetual puzzle of an opera. The cast features standout



performances from, among others, Sandra Piques Eddy, Kyle Pfortmiller, and James Maddalena; the venerable Julius Rudel, one of the company's visionary founders, takes the podium. (Nov. 15 at 7:30 and Nov. 17 at 8.) ♦ A new cast, featuring Georgia Jarman, Leonardo Capalbo, and Michael Chioldi in the leading roles, performs in the new Jonathan Miller production of **"L'Elisir d'Amore,"** set in the American Southwest; Gerald Steichen conducts. (Nov. 16 at 7:30.) ♦ James Robinson's 1998 production of Humperdinck's charming **"Hansel and Gretel,"** tantalizingly set in Central Park circa 1893, gets revitalized with a host of impressive young singers. Julianne Borg and Jennifer Tiller dispatch their demanding roles as the title characters with appropriate energy, but it is the mezzo-soprano Jennifer Roderer, as the witch (inhabiting a gingerbread apartment on the Upper East Side), who makes the show come alive; she sings and cackles in equal measure, to delightfully creepy effect. Steven Mosteller's whipped-up orchestra delivers lusciously Wagnerian sounds. (Nov. 18-19 at 1:30. Jennifer Aylmer, Jennifer Rivera, and Jessie Raven take the leading roles in the Nov. 18 performance.) ♦ **"Carmen,"** with Vanessa Cariddi (in the title role), Kerri Marcinko, Scott Piper, and Daesan No; Gary Thor Wedow. (Nov. 18 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500. These are the final performances of the fall season.)

"ORPHÉE AUX ENFERS"

Offenbach's **"Orpheus in the Underworld,"** as delightfully bubbly as the best champagne, is offered by the Juilliard Opera Center (in a version that blends fragments of the 1874 revision into the 1858 score); Anne Manson conducts. (Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 212-721-6500. Nov. 15 and Nov. 17 at 8 and Nov. 19 at 2.)

AMATO OPERA: "RIGOLETTO"

Those looking for a feisty rendition of Verdi's melodrama can head to the company's tiny theatre on the Lower East Side to take in a performance by a hardy mix of professionals and amateurs (under the estimable direction of the company's patriarch, Anthony Amato). (319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. Nov. 17-18 at 7:30 and Nov. 19 at 2:30. Through Nov. 26.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

Kent Tritle, the grand Catholic church's music director, leads a program blending sacred works by Bruckner (the Mass in E Minor) and Janáček with Hindemith's very secular Kammermusik No. 7 (an irreverent organ concerto). (Park Ave. at 84th St. 212-288-2520. Nov. 15 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC: KREMLIN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Olga Bloom's little music barge will stretch to its limits this weekend as the Russian ensemble, seventeen strong, gives a concert of works by Schnittke, Vainberg, and Boris Tchaikovsky, conducted by Misha Rachlevsky. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. Nov. 17 at 7:30. For full schedule, see www.bargemusic.org.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: "SYMPHONIC MEXICO"

A distinguished guest—Anne Akiko Myers—is the soloist in the seldom heard Violin Concerto by Manuel Ponce (from 1943), part of a program of works by such titans as Revueltas (the volcanic "Noche de los Mayas") and Chávez ("Sinfonía di Antigona," inspired by Sophocles). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5030. Nov. 17 at 8.)

RIAS KAMMERCHOR BERLIN

The supremely disciplined chamber choir makes its New York début in a concert that looks at the German choral tradition from both within (part-songs by Brahms and Schubert) and without (Ligeti's "Drei Phantasien nach Friedrich Hölderin" and arrangements of two scenes from "Tristan und Isolde"). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Nov. 18 at 8.)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

The sumptuous orchestra's latest concert at Carnegie Hall features Berg's Violin Concerto (with the insightful soloist Leonidas Kavakos) and Mahler's Symphony No. 4 (with the soprano Marisol Montalvo); Christoph Eschenbach conducts. (212-247-7800. Nov. 21 at 8.)

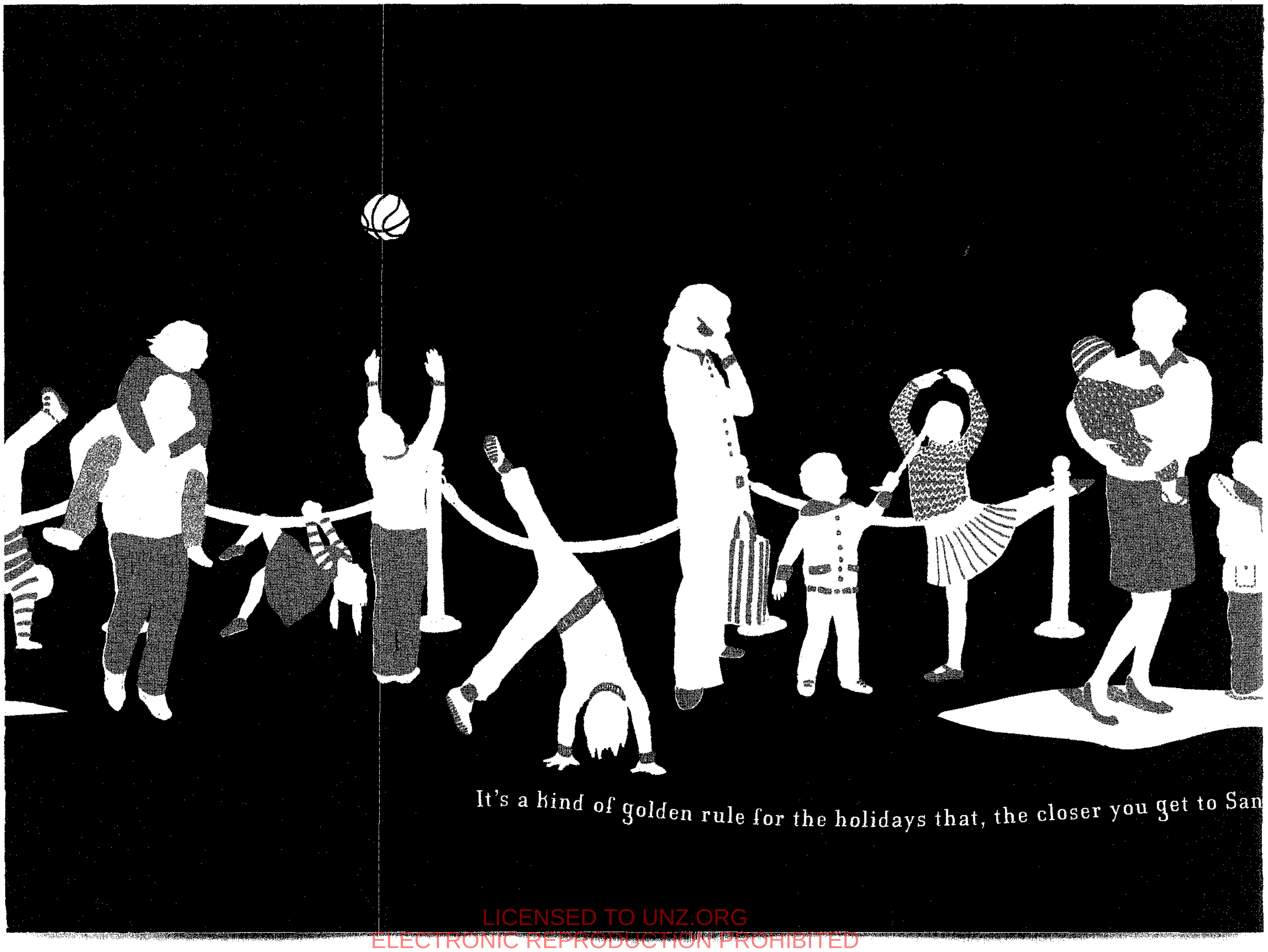
RECITALS

JONATHAN BISS AND BENJAMIN HOCHMAN

Two up-and-coming pianists offer works from the classic duo repertoire, including Schubert's Fantasie in F Minor and Bartók's Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion (played with another duo, James Deitz and Ayano Kataoka). (92nd Street Y, 92nd St. at Lexington Ave. 212-415-5500. Nov. 15 at 8.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG

The longtime series, having transferred its flag back to Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall, offers "Brava Italia!," a festive evening of songs by a wide variety of composers both Italian (from Puccini to Pizzetti) and Italian-American (Argento, Musto, and Corigliano). The singers are Carolyn Betty, Sasha Cooke, and Jeremy Little; Steven Blier is the pianist and compère. (212-247-7800. Nov. 15-16 at 8.)


It's a kind of golden rule for the holidays that, the closer you get to San

ANNE-SOPHIE MUTTER
Mutter, an intrepid musician who plays the classic violin repertory with a mixture of surgical analysis and heady glamour, surveys fifteen of Mozart's Sonatas for Piano and Violin in three concerts with her trusted partner, Lambert Orkis. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 15 and Nov. 17 at 8 and Nov. 19 at 2.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Members of the Society perform Debussy's three chamber sonatas, along with new works (by Stucky, Saariaho, and Dalbavie) that complete the composer's six-piece plan. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. Nov. 17 at 8 and Nov. 19 at 5.)

PAUL O'DETTE
The renowned Boston lutenist, who brings a rock-star energy to the most refined of repertories, gives a solo recital of works by Capirola, Da Milano, De Rore, and other Renaissance masters. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 18 at 7:30.)

SIMONE DINNERSTEIN
Intensity and finesse are the hallmarks of this acclaimed young pianist's style. In her only New York recital of the season, she offers works by Bach, Schumann, Copland (the "Piano Variations"), and Beethoven (the valedictory Sonata in C Minor, Op. 111) at the Metropolitan Museum. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Nov. 19 at 3.)

MAGDALENA KOŽENÁ
The dusky charm of this mezzo-soprano's voice has worn well at the Metropolitan Opera; she crosses Lincoln Center Plaza to offer songs by Fauré, Dvořák (the "Gypsy Songs"), and Schumann ("Frauenliebe- und Leben"), accompanied by the excellent Malcolm Martineau. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Nov. 19 at 2.)

AN DIE MUSIK
Two superb young string players—Colin Jacobsen and Nicholas Mann—join the affable and expert group in a program featuring works by Mozart (the Viola Quintet in C Major, K. 515, and the Oboe Quartet) and Beethoven. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Nov. 19 at 4.)

"MUSIC BEFORE 1800" SERIES: TRIO MEDIAEVAL
The magnificent Norwegian female vocal trio, which brings a radiant and magical touch to music both new and old, offers a program entitled "Rose Window: Medieval Music and Norwegian Songs" at Corpus Christi Church. (529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Nov. 19 at 4.)

MOVIES OPENING

THE AURA
Fabián Bielinsky directed this drama, about a taxidermist who accidentally shoots a hotel owner. In Spanish. Opening Nov. 17. (IFC Center.)

BOBBY
A drama that depicts the intertwined lives of people who were associated with Robert F. Kennedy during his last day, starring Anthony Hopkins, Demi Moore, Lindsay Lohan, Laurence Fishburne, and Elijah Wood. Directed by Emilio Estevez. Opening Nov. 17. (In wide release.)

CANDY
Heath Ledger stars as a poet and heroin addict in this drama, directed by Neil Armfield. Opening Nov. 17. (Angelika Film Center.)

CASINO ROYALE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 17. (In wide release.)

ENCOUNTER POINT
A documentary directed by Ronit Avni and Julia Bacha, about efforts at reconciliation by Israeli and Palestinian victims of violence. In Arabic, English, and Hebrew. Opening Nov. 17. (Quad Cinema.)

FAST FOOD NATION
Richard Linklater directed this dramatic adaptation of Eric Schlosser's nonfiction best-seller, about the effects of fast food on the life of the nation. Starring Ethan Hawke and Patricia Arquette. Opening Nov. 17. (In wide release.)

FLANNEL PAJAMAS
A romantic drama about a New York couple and their daily conflicts, directed by Jeff Lipsky. Opening Nov. 15. (Angelika Film Center.)

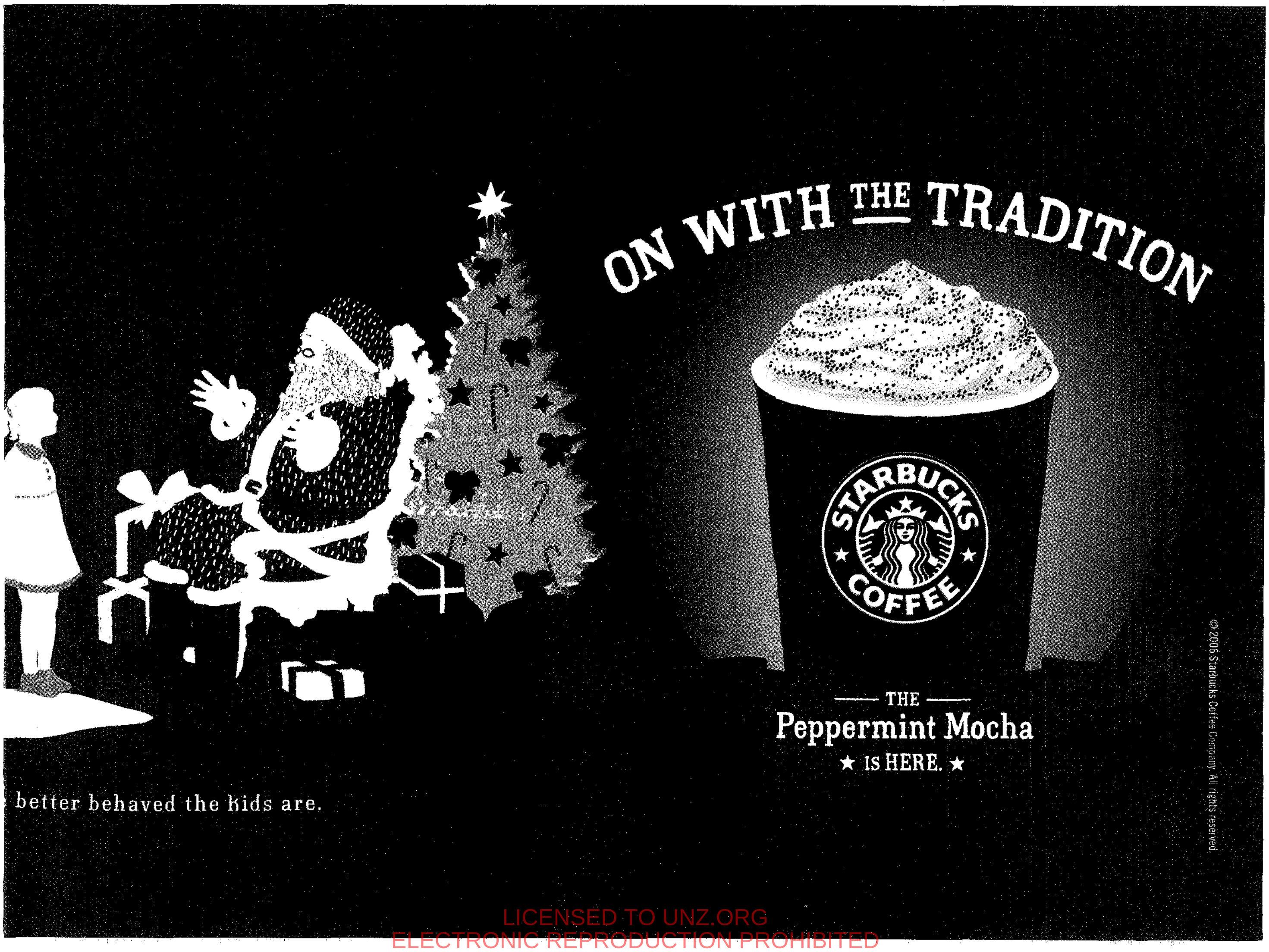
FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
A mockumentary by Christopher Guest, about the making of an independent film and the attempts to publicize it. Opening Nov. 17. (Lincoln Square and Sunshine Cinema.)

HAPPY FEET
A CGI comedy about a dancing penguin who leaves his flock, directed by George Miller. With the voices of Elijah Wood and Robin Williams. Opening Nov. 17. (In wide release.)

THE HISTORY BOYS
Nicholas Hytner directed this drama, based on a play by Alan Bennett, about eight ambitious English schoolboys. Opening Nov. 21. (In wide release.)

LET'S GO TO PRISON
A comedy, directed by Bob Odenkirk, about a convict who gets a judge's son thrown in jail. Starring Will Arnett and Dax Shepard. Opening Nov. 17. (In wide release.)

THE PIANO TUNER OF EARTHQUAKES
The Quay brothers, Stephen and Timothy, directed this fantasy, about a doctor who wants to turn an opera singer into a nightingale. Opening Nov. 17. (Cinema Village.)



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NOW PLAYING

BABEL

Alejandro González Iñárritu creates savagely beautiful and heartbreaking images, he gets fearless performances out of his actors, he edits with the sharpest razor inside any computer in Hollywood, and he also abuses his audience with a humorless fatalism and a piling up of calamities that border on the ludicrous. "Babel" is set in Morocco, Tokyo, and both Southern California and northern Mexico. The movie has three stories—all touching on relationships between parents and children—which have been arbitrarily linked together by the will of the director and his collaborator, the screenwriter Guillermo Arriaga. Their theme is the pathos of ignorance. All over the world, terrible things are happening, and we cannot know them or feel them, but an eagle-eyed artist, as he spans the globe, can connect us. As a mood, this globalized empathy is a noble enterprise. As a method of constructing a movie, it's hopeless. With Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett as a couple that gets in trouble in Morocco, Adriana Barraza as their housekeeper and nanny back home with the kids in San Diego, and Rinko Kikuchi as a teen-age girl in Tokyo desperate for the embrace of a man. In French, English, Spanish, Japanese, Berber, and Arabic.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 10/30/06.) (In wide release.)

"Haifosstal 1" (2000), from Olaf Otto Becker's show "Under the Nordic Light," at Cohen Amador.

BORAT

Somewhere inside the sound and fury that have shrouded this project is a short, gross, and very funny series of sketches, lightly knotted together into a modern picaresque. Sacha Baron Cohen, the British performer behind Ali G, brings his yet-more-notorious invention, the Kazakh journalist Borat Sagdiyev, to the United States, where his shameless curiosity, not to mention a reckless indifference to political correctness, is designed to cause maximum offense. The plot, if you can call it that, demands that Borat travel across the country to find Pamela Anderson: a noble quest, even if it does mean putting that distinguished actress in a sack. Some of the time, our hero is accompanied by his manager, Azamat (Ken Davitian), and also by a live bear, although Azamat looks more like a bear than the bear does. There are jokes thrown at Jews, African-Americans, rodeo fans, homosexuals, and, for good measure, the rest of the population. The smart explanation for this is that Baron Cohen, who is Jewish himself, is assaulting intolerance wherever he finds it; what he cannot control is the fate of the film itself, and one wonders whether, to a late-night college audience, say, the irony behind Borat would be of much concern. Could the movie become a safety valve, encouraging its fans to let off steam?—*Anthony Lane* (11/6/06) (In wide release.)

FLUSHED AWAY

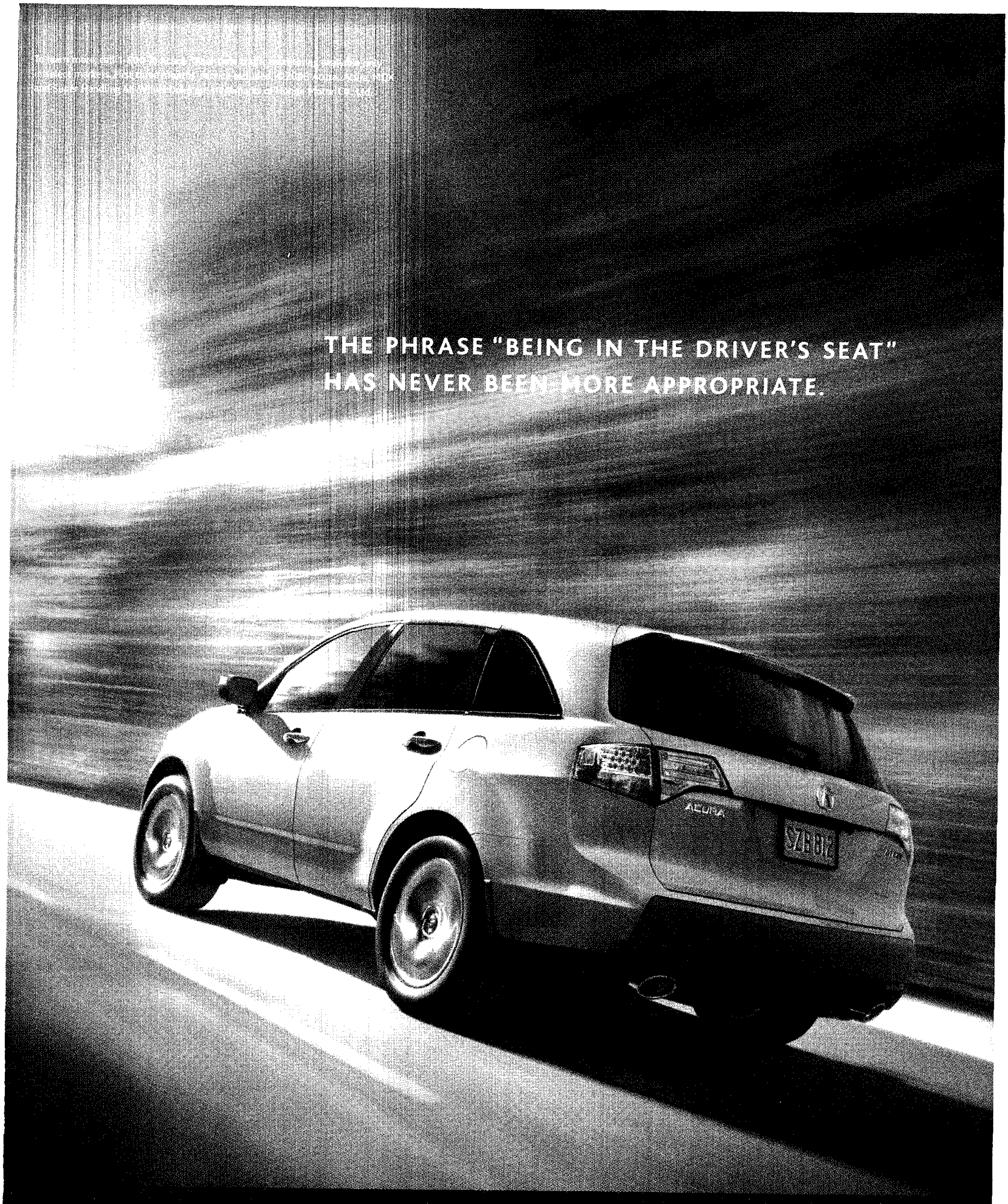
The swankiest sewer system ever put on film belongs to this computer-animated bauble about a pampered pet mouse (voiced by Hugh Jackman) who's flushed down a London toilet and teams up with other sewer creatures to fight an evil toad (Ian McKellen) and his goons. The film, directed by David Bowers and Sam Fell in the style of Nick Park's brilliant clay-animation romps, has all the English whimsy and sweetness of the Wallace and Gromit films, along with a very American need for speed. Though the characters mix it up in spectacular, Technicolor ways, the story, along with the usual cartoon lessons on community and responsibility, turns out to have a very cheeky class-warfare bite. With its singing slugs and refuse that looks like shards from an old Hollywood M-G-M set, this subterranean adventure is surprisingly captivating.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

FUR

An excruciatingly misguided fantasia about the young Diane Arbus (Nicole Kidman), a highly competent but anxious fifties wife who wanders upstairs in her New York house and enters the world of a man suffering from hypertrichosis—excessive hairiness. His name is Lionel, and he's a quietly dominating gent who murmurs to Diane in confiding tones and orders her around. Step by step, Arbus's life with her husband and children gives way to her life with Lionel, who introduces her to a netherworld of outcasts and freaks. The movie is meant to be an erotically charged version of "Beauty and the Beast," but it comes off as Mrs. Miniver Meets Chewbacca. In what is supposed to be a terribly touching scene, Diane shaves off all of Lionel's body hair, which requires quite a bit of lather. Her expert barbering reveals the handsome torso and doleful countenance of Robert Downey, Jr., the wolfman reborn as a lover. Written by Erin Cressida Wilson and directed by Steven Shainberg.—*D.D.* (11/13/06) (In wide release.)

GERMANY YEAR ZERO

Filming on location in Berlin in 1947, Roberto Rossellini presents a pessimistic view of the physical and political reconstruction of postwar Germany. In streets of rubble and ruins, passersby cut meat from a dead horse and scramble for lumps of coal, and young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women trawl the nightspots for sugar daddies from among the occupying Allies. In the midst of this chaotic struggle, the twelve-year-old Edmund Köhler (Edmund Moeschke) is overwhelmed: his mother is dead; his father is an invalid; his sister is out of work; his older brother (Franz-Otto Krüger), a soldier who fought to the bitter end, is in hiding to avoid arrest; and they live with four other families in a single apartment in a shattered building. Combing the city for food, Edmund meets by chance his former teacher Mr. Henning (Erich Gühne), an unreformed Nazi who encourages him to take radical steps to improve the family's lot. With a coolly logical view of the range of unbearable options, Rossellini laments the corrupting influence of poverty, the deeply rooted German ideology, the moral price of survival in the face of catastrophic defeat, and an entire generation's stolen childhood. In German.—*Richard Brody* (MOMA; Nov. 16.)

A GOOD YEAR

It's always a good year for Peter Mayle, the author who has, by our count, concocted twelve books out of the pleasures of living in Provence. In this movie, based on a Mayle novel, Russell Crowe is Max Skinner, an unscrupulous bond trader living in a dark and dreary London where it's always raining, or about to rain, or has just finished raining—even indoors, it seems, since the decorator colors in the interiors are sleet gray. Max inherits the charming Provençal property Château La Siroque from the uncle (Albert Finney) with whom he used to spend his summers. You can figure out the rest. There are wily Provençal types, a beautiful woman (Marion Cotillard) who rides a bicycle with her hair flying in the breeze, great meals, and much confusing intrigue about a peculiar corner of the château's vineyards. The director, Ridley Scott, has trouble finding a suitable tempo and style. The movie is wildly overshot and overcut; the simplest scenes jump around from one angle to another. The filmmakers may love Provence, but they don't trust the audience to love it—even as a travelogue, the movie is a cheat.—*D.D.* (11/13/06) (In wide release.)

MARIE ANTOINETTE

If you want your movies to feel like watered silk—lustrous, precious, and thinner than skin—then Sofia Coppola's latest venture is for you. Kirsten Dunst, who even at her ditziest gives off a whiff of the narcoleptic, stars as Marie Antoinette, betrothed as an Austrian teen-ager to the clueless Dauphin of France (Jason Schwartzman). The sexual allure of her husband is on a par with the pink blancmanges on the dinner table, which is bad news for the royal succession but good for Coppola, who is left free to concentrate on desserts, hair styles, footwear, and other essentials of life. The result is less a character study than a pre-Revolutionary style catalogue, unembarrassed in its rage for the superficial. Somewhere beneath the frippery, there is a whisper of political threat: if the Queen really *was* as prodigal and heedless as this, no wonder the mobs were on the march. Toward the end, Coppola does indeed show Versailles under siege, but the onslaught is far too paltry, and too late, to hold any terrors. The cast is a mixed salad: Rip Torn as the randy old King, Asia Argento as his mistress, Judy Davis as a court harpy, and Marianne Faithfull, no less, as the mother of Marie Antoinette.—*A.L.* (10/23/06) (In wide release.)

OUR SONG

The heroines of this robustly poignant coming-of-age film are fifteen- and sixteen-year-old girls who are working out their identities in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, during the fading weeks of summer. Every now and then the movie gets an adrenaline charge from glimpses of the Jackie Robinson Steppers, their super-syncopated marching band, but the girls' chatter and silences are what give the movie its sinuous, poetic development. The good student and gifted drummer Lanisha (Kerry Washington), the sensitive, heavy-hearted Maria (Melissa Martinez), and the practical-minded Joycelyn (Anna Simpson) splendidly express the unpredictable ebb and flow of friendship and group spirit at a volatile stage of life. The movie is superbly matter-of-fact in depicting subjects as different as the emotional cluelessness of proudly footloose teen-age boys, the level of ominous and explosive noise that the characters have learned to live with, the inability of well-meaning social workers to alter family traditions. The director Jim McKay's achievement is to show the three girls' diverging paths not as a defeat for friendship but as a transition to new possibilities. The movie's signature song, "Ooh Child," registers as a secular prayer, sweet in its simplicity, devastating in its ache for better times. Released in 2001.—*Michael Sragow* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Nov. 21.)

THE QUEEN

The new Stephen Frears film considers the deadlock, both grieving and comical, that followed the death of the Princess of Wales, in 1997. On the one hand, the Queen (Helen Mirren), believing it to be a private matter, stays and broods in Scotland with the Duke of Edinburgh (James Cromwell) and Prince Charles (Alex Jennings). On the other hand, Tony Blair (Michael Sheen), sensing a thirst for public mourning and thus a unique political opportunity, urges Her Majesty to return to London and face down the mob. And so she does; the crux of the drama comes when Mirren turns to the crowd outside Buckingham Palace and, with one smile, quashes any prospect of rebellion. The script, by Peter Morgan, relies largely on well-grounded speculation, and sticklers for accuracy will find the whole thing straying beyond belief; but, thanks to the careful performances, you subscribe all too readily to the movie's suggestion of a divided land—of a Britain caught between the trustworthy stiffness of tradition and a liberalism that is open not just to emotional honesty but to the coarseness of modern excess.

A TROUBLED
PAST.
AN OMINOUS
FUTURE
Former U.S. Embassy, Tehran

With Helen McCrory as a distinctly unceremonious Cherie Blair.—*A.L.* (10/9/06) (In wide release.)

THE TROUBLES WE'VE SEEN

In 1993, Marcel Ophuls went to Sarajevo, which was under siege, to film this epic documentary (running almost four hours) about war correspondents at work. He followed them into the fray and observed how they gathered and presented their information. In detailed interviews, such journalistic luminaries as John Burns of the New York *Times* evoke the danger, the bravado, and the camaraderie of the profession, as well as the moral responsibility of bearing witness. But as Ophuls expands the scope of his film to include discussions with a range of media figures and intellectuals (including Phillip Knightley, Alain Finkielkraut, and the filmmaker Romain Goupil) his critique of the conventions of the information business, in which journalists are ineluctable players, emerges. Speaking in his own cantankerous, uninhibited voice, showing himself onscreen in less than heroic stances, Ophuls turns the process of reporting into an intensely personal experience. Inserting clips from films that comment ironically on the action, including "Only Angels Have Wings," "His Girl Friday," and "Duck Soup"—as well as "From Mayerling to Sarajevo" and "Lola Montes," directed by his father, Max Ophuls—the director suggests that if his documentaries are a little different, a little better, it's because he himself is a child of the cinema, and his films are a living part of that tradition. In French, English, Bosnian, and Serbian. Released in 1994.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives; Nov. 17-19.)

VOLVER

The new film from Pedro Almodóvar stars Penélope Cruz as Raimunda, who is soon seen mopping up the blood of her murdered husband—slain by her daughter, whom he tried to abuse—and stashing him in a freezer. This being Almodóvar, such horrors have a jaunty edge, and the colors (red gore against blue floor) are picked out with an unembarrassed eye. The story is more or less a male-free zone, and any other director would be chastised for training his camera so devotedly on a succession of cleavages. We follow Raimunda's timid sister (Lola Dueñas) as she mourns her aunt (Chus Lampreave) and then takes up, quite happily, with the ghost of her dead mother (Carmen Maura). Misfortune has befallen every generation, yet the victims are more resigned than surprised, as if, like the cheery local hooker (María Isabel Díaz), they know all men are traitors to begin with. Hitchcockians will warm to the credit sequence, which could be by Saul Bass, and to the score, which shimmers with echoes of Bernard Herrmann; even Hitchcock, however, might have balked at the level of emotional control that Almodóvar exerts upon his characters. You feel yourself gripped by a beautiful machine, engineered for the finest melodrama. In Spanish.—*A.L.* (11/6/06) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

CATCH A FIRE: In wide release. **COME EARLY MORNING:** In wide release. **COPYING BEETHOVEN:** Paris. **THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND:** In wide release (10/2/06). **THE RETURN:** In wide release. **STRANGER THAN FICTION:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Special screening. Nov. 15-16 at 7:30 and 9:30: "Me and My Brother" (1965-68, Robert Frank). ♦ Nov. 17 at 7:30 and Nov. 18-19 at 3 and 7:30: "The Troubles We've Seen" (†). ♦ "The *Onion* Presents." Nov. 16 at 8: "They Live" (1988, John Carpenter). ♦ "Essential Cinema." Nov. 19 at 4:30: "Anticipation of the Night" (1958, Stan Brakhage) and "Short Films 1975 #1-10" (1975, Brakhage). ♦ Nov. 19 at 4:30: "Arabic Series 0-10" (1980-81, Brakhage).

AVIGNON/NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL

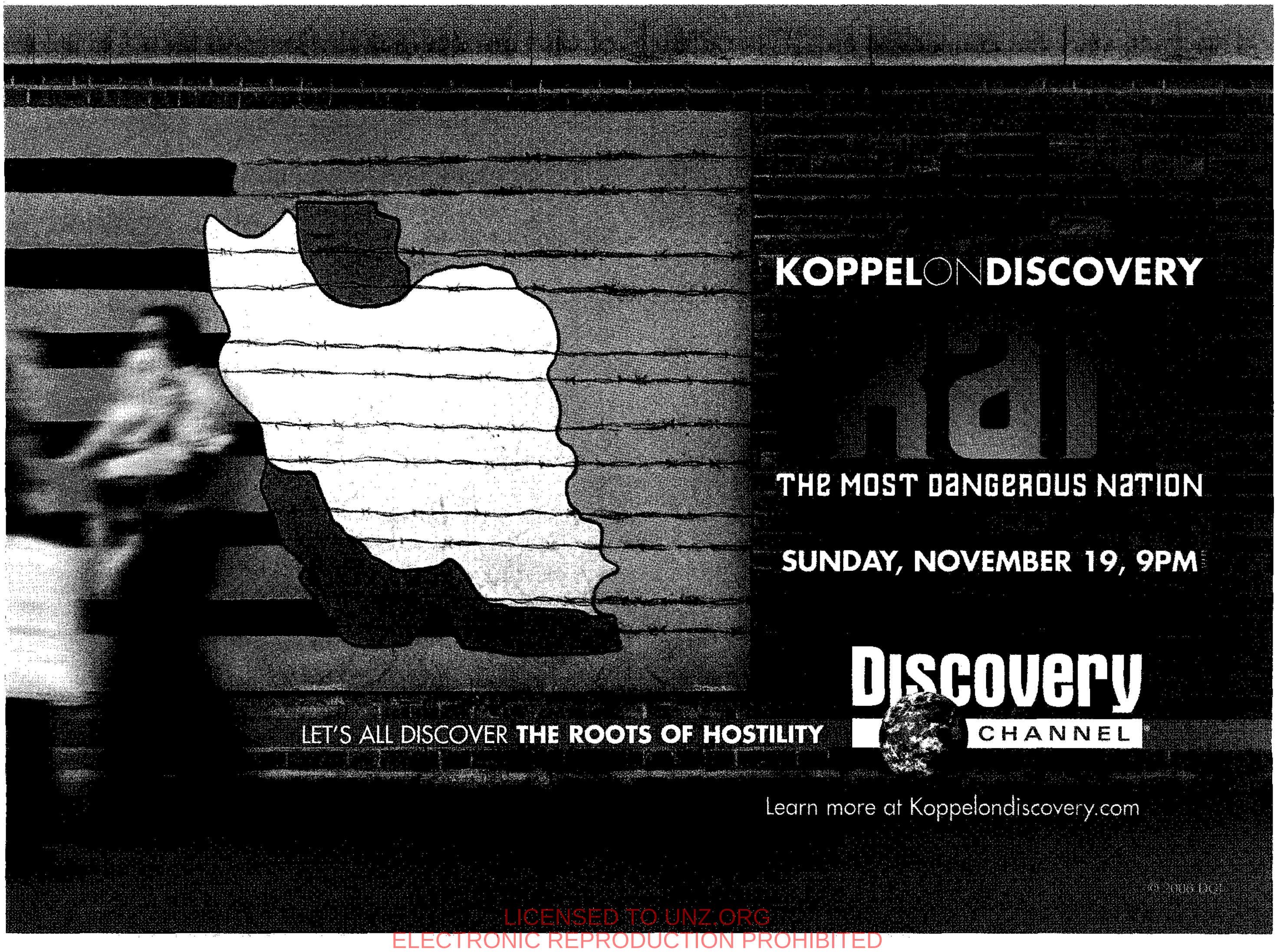
Hunter College, 68th St. at Lexington Ave. (212-650-3083)—Selected screenings. Nov. 16 at 1 and Nov. 18 at 7: "The Limbo Room" (2006, Debra Eisenstadt). ♦ Nov. 16 at 3:45 and Nov. 17 at 9:30: "Sheitan" (2006, Kim Chapiron; in French). ♦ Nov. 17 at 1 and Nov. 18 at 6:30: "A Summer Day" (2006, Franck Guérin; in French). (For complete program, go to www.avignonfilmfest.com.)

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Cinema Tropical." Nov. 15 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Magic Gloves" (2003, Martín Rejtman; in Spanish). ♦ "Torino Cinema." All films are in Italian. Nov. 17 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Second Time" (1996, Mimmo Calopresti). ♦ Nov. 18 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "After Midnight" (2004, Davide Ferrario). ♦ Nov. 19 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Wind Blows Around" (2005, Giorgio Diritti). ♦ "Three by Jim McKay." All screenings are free. Nov. 18 at 6:50: "Angel Rodriguez" (2006), followed by a Q. & A. with the actor Jonan Everett and the director. ♦ Nov. 20 at 6:50: "Everyday People" (2004). ♦ Nov. 21 at 6:50: "Our Song" (†). ♦ Martial-arts films. Nov. 20 at 6:50 and 9:15: "The New One-Armed Swordsman" (1971, Chang Cheh; in Mandarin).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Nov. 15-21 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "The Rules of the Game" (1939, Jean Renoir; in French). ♦ Nov. 17-21 at 1:30,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3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Two or Three Things I Know About Her" (1966, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of Jacques Audiard. Nov. 21 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "A Self-Made Hero" (1996; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Waverly Midnights." Nov. 17-18: "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" (1975, Jim Sharman), accompanied by live performances. ♦ New York International Children's Film Festival. Nov. 18-19 at 11 A.M.: Short films from Aardman Animation. ♦ "Ecotopia." Nov. 20 at 7: "Finished" (1997, William E. Jones). ♦ Nov. 20 at 8:30: "The Joy of Life" (2005, Jenni Olson).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through Dec. 22: The films of Roberto Rossellini. Except where noted, all films are in Italian. Nov. 15 at 5: "Scorsese on Rossellini" (1999, Martin Scorsese; in English). ♦ Nov. 15 at 7:30 and Nov. 19 at 3:30: "Open City" (1945). The Nov. 15 screening will be introduced by Ingrid and Isabella Rossellini. ♦ Nov. 16 at 6 and Nov. 19 at 5:30: "Paisan" (1946). ♦ Nov. 16 at 8:15: "Germany Year Zero" (†). ♦ Nov. 17 at 6: "The Flowers of St. Francis" (1950). ♦ Nov. 17 at 8: "The Messiah" (1975). ♦ Nov. 18 at 2: "Stromboli" (1949). ♦ Nov. 18 at 4: "Voyage in Italy" (1953). ♦ Nov. 18 at 6: "Europa 51" (1952). ♦ Nov. 18 at 8 and Nov. 20 at 6:15: "Man's Struggle for Survival," episode two (1967-69; in English). ♦ Nov. 19 at 1:15 and Nov. 20 at 8: "Once Upon a Time . . . Rome Open City" (2006, Marie Genin and Serge July) and footage from the unfinished "Science" (c. 1973). ♦ Special screening. Nov. 16 at 6: "The Joy of Life" (2005, Jenni Olson). ♦ "Prix Jean Vigo." Nov. 17 at 8:30 and Nov. 18 at 4:30: "That Old Dream That Moves" (2001, Alain Guiraudie; in French) and "L'Arpenteur" (2001, Sarah Petit and Michel Klein; in French). ♦ Nov. 18 at 2: "Resisting Remembrance" (2000, Orso Miret; in French).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Special screening. Nov. 17 at 7:30: "Pandora's Box" (1929, G. W. Pabst; silent). The world première of a new restoration, introduced by Peter Cowie, a biographer of Louise Brooks. ♦ Through Dec. 31: The films of Jacques Rivette. All films are in French. Nov. 18 at 2: "Jacques Rivette, the Night Watchman" (1990, Claire Denis). ♦ Nov. 18 at 4:30: "The Nun" (1965) and "Fool's Mate" (1956). ♦ Nov. 18 at 7:30: "Duelle" (1975). ♦ Nov. 19 at 2: "Jean Renoir, the Boss" (1967). ♦ Nov. 19 at 4:30: "Noroît" (1976).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—In revival. Nov. 15 at 7 and Nov. 17 at 10:45: "Strangers with Candy" (2005, Paul Dinello). ♦ In première. Nov. 15-21 at 9: "Dance Party USA" (2006, Aaron Katz).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Nov. 17-18: "American Psycho" (2000, Mary Harron; unrated version, no one under 18 admitted).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Thalia Film Classics." Nov. 19 and Nov. 21 at 4:30: "The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl" (1993, Ray Müller; in German).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Special screening. Nov. 15 at 6:30: "Diary of a Lost Girl" (1929, G. W. Pabst; silent), introduced by Peter Cowie, a biographer of Louise Brooks. ♦ Through Nov. 26: "Dziga and His Brothers." Nov. 17 at 2: "On the Waterfront" (1954, Elia Kazan). ♦ Nov. 17 at 4:15: "Zero for Conduct" (1933, Jean Vigo; in French) and "À Propos de Nice" (1930, Vigo; silent). ♦ Nov. 17 at 6:15: "Man with the Movie Camera" (Dziga Vertov, 1929; silent). ♦ Nov. 17 at 8:15: "In Spring" (1929, Mikhail Kaufman; silent). ♦ Nov. 18 at 6:30: "Kino-Eye" (1924, Vertov; silent). ♦ Nov. 18 at 8:30: "A Sixth Part of the World" (1926, Vertov; silent). ♦ Nov. 19 at 2: "Forward, Soviet!" (1926, Vertov; silent). ♦ Nov. 19 at 4:30: "The Eleventh Year" (1928, Vertov; silent). ♦ Nov. 20 at 4 and Nov. 21 at 3:45: "Bye Bye Braverman" (1968, Sidney Lumet). ♦ Nov. 20 at 8:30: "Enthusiasm" (1931, Vertov). ♦ Nov. 21 at 1:30: "The Pawnbroker" (1964, Lumet).

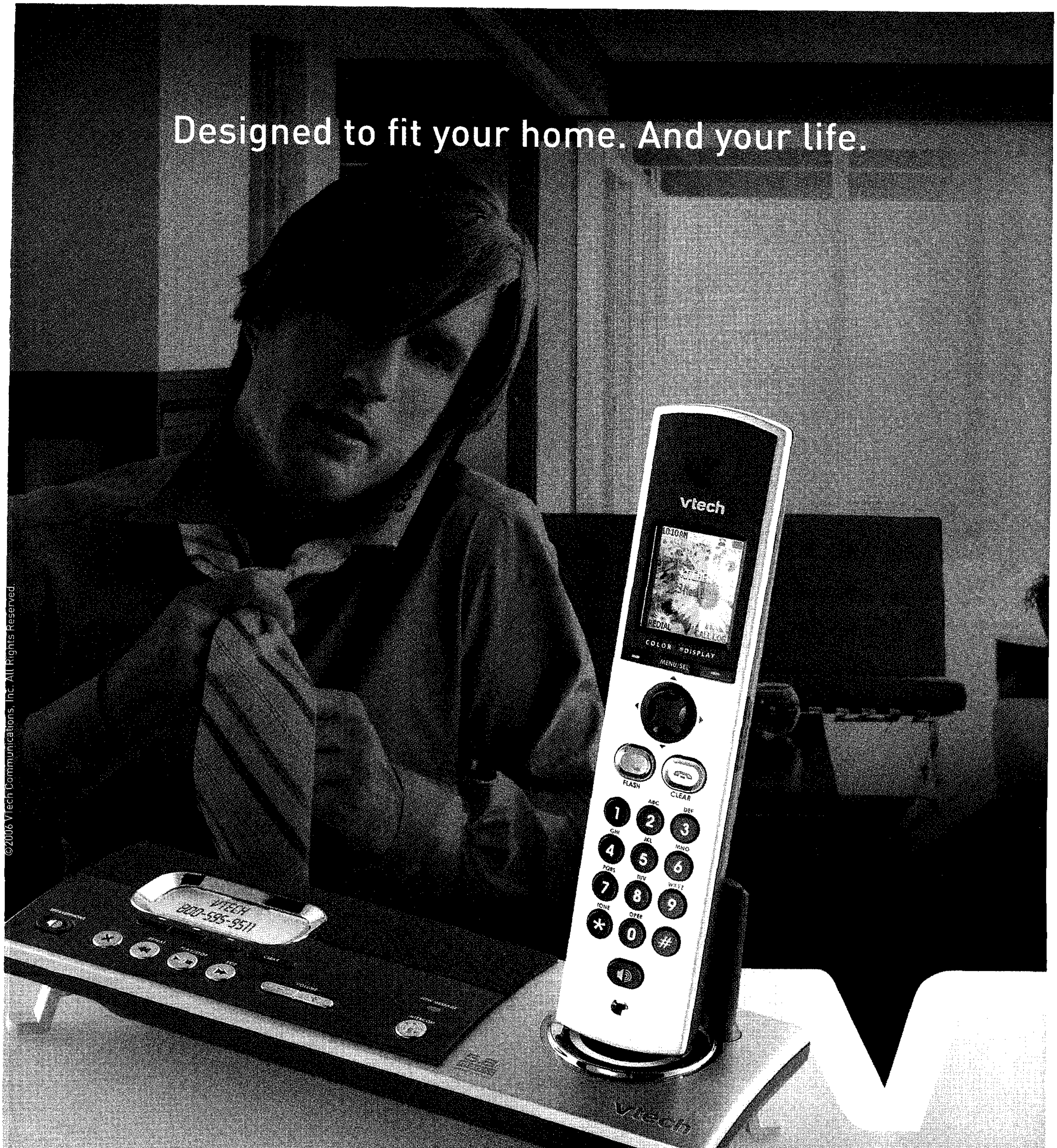
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

MATERIAL WITNESS

JASHAR AWAN

Jean-Luc Godard's "Two or Three Things I Know About Her," made in 1966, returns on Nov. 17 for a two-week run at Film Forum. Set beside other movies from the time, it looks remarkably unfaded; the length of the heroine's skirt may be a giveaway, as is her red Mini, but the film mounts such a blistering inquiry into the commodities in which we encase ourselves that you long to see its method deployed against the fetishes of today. Marina Vlady plays a married woman who prostitutes herself to make ends meet, although her story has to fight for air against Godard's penchant for the essay—his furious doubts (heard in the chewy, conspiratorial whisper of his voice-over) about how any coherent tale can be told, or even whether simple details can be honestly described. Cranes swing repeatedly on the Paris skyline, and a sunlit stroll is rerun two or three times, as if to pin it down in the memory. This is as far as a filmmaker can go before narrative folds and crumples in his hands, which accounts, perhaps, for the movie's perplexing strain of sadness, with Vlady craving only, as she says, "to catch a fleeting reason to be alive."

—*Anthony Lane*



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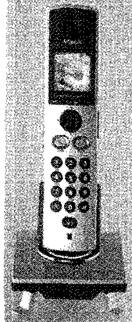

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READINGS AND TALKS

192 BOOKS
James Salter, the author of "A Sport and a Pastime," "Light Years," and short-story collections, memoirs, and other novels, recently teamed up with his wife, Kay, for "Life Is Meals: A Food Lover's Book of Days." They read from it here on Nov. 15 at 7. (Tenth Ave. between 21st and 22nd Sts. For reservations, which are required, call 212-255-4022.)

PETE'S CANDY STORE
Lynne Tillman reads from her novel "American Genius, a Comedy," and Alison Smith offers selections from her memoir, "Name All the Animals." (709 Lorimer St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. No tickets necessary. Nov. 16 at 7:30.)

FRIENDS OF OLD TIME MUSIC CONFERENCE
In the early sixties, F.O.T.M. brought traditional Southern performers to the city. On Nov. 18 from 10 to 5, key members of that scene reminisce at CUNY's Graduate Center. Their discussions will be followed by a concert at Town Hall (see Night Life). (Fifth Ave. at 34th St. For more information, visit www.bcisam.org.)

RICHARD FORD
The author of "The Sportswriter" and "Independence Day" reads from his latest novel, "The Lay of the Land." (Barnes & Noble, 33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary. Nov. 20 at 7.)

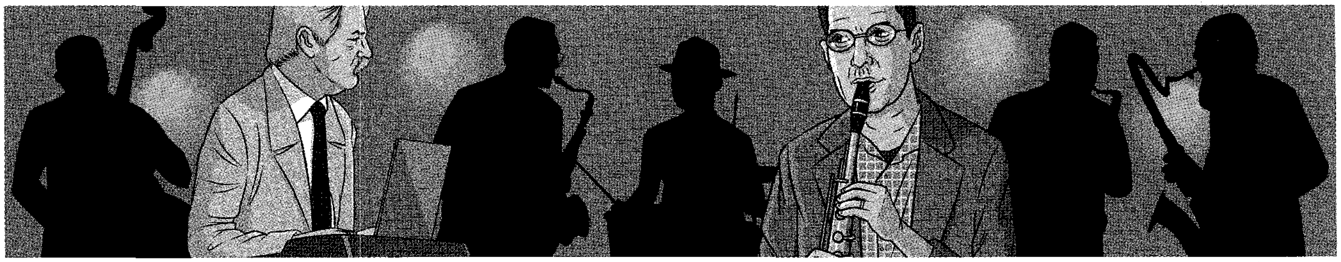
92ND STREET Y
The *New Yorker* editor Roger Angell and Francine du Plessix Gray, a contributor to this magazine, read from their latest works: the memoir "Let Me Finish" and "Them: A Memoir of Parents," respectively. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Nov. 20 at 8.)

THE CORNER BOOKSTORE
Amanda Vaill reads from her new biography of one of America's greatest choreographers, "Somewhere: The Life of Jerome Robbins." (Madison Ave. at 93rd St. 212-831-3554. Nov. 21 at 6.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

NOVEMBER KNOT-TYING WORKSHOP
Not a source for advice on late-fall weddings, this event offers information on actual knots, which have been vital throughout history to the livelihoods of farmers, cattle hands, sailors, and thieves. Seth Goodwin, a U.S. Coast Guard licensed captain and seafaring veteran, will give detailed instruction on half a dozen different knots, including the bowline, the clove hitch, and the highwayman's cutaway (reportedly a favorite of bandits engaged in stagecoach robberies), along with some thirty variations on them. His teaching will be accompanied by entertaining bits of lore gathered from his decade-long experience with tall ships. "Knot tying," Goodwin says, "is an entertaining hobby that's also good for tying up the recycling, your dog, or stuff to the roof of a car." (The Waterfront Museum and Showboat Barge, 290 Conover St., Red Hook, Brooklyn. For reservations, which are required, call 917-488-1457. Nov. 19 from 3 to 5.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
High-powered auctions of postwar and contemporary art are turning up the heat around town. **Sotheby's** begins with an evening sale (Nov. 14) that features a large painting by Francis Bacon from 1968, "Version No. 2 of Lying Figure with Hypodermic Syringe," a riotous and yet oddly serene depiction of pleasure and abandon by the British master, as well as "Voltri XVII," a graceful steel sculpture by David Smith. After a day of contemporary sales, the house changes gears on Nov. 16, with an intimate auction of art work and personal effects from the collection of David Whitney, the longtime partner of the architect Philip Johnson; the week closes with a day of African, Oceanic, and pre-Columbian art (Nov. 17). (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Christie's** is offering eight important works by Warhol at its evening sale of postwar and contemporary art (Nov. 15), including "Mao," a playful portrait of the Great Helmsman set against a hopeful, azure sky. Other important works are by de Kooning, Pollock, and Lichtenstein, as well as more recent stars like Damien Hirst, whose "Yes, But How Do You Really Feel" (a stainless-steel display case with six plastic skeletons inside) treads the thin line between the ghoulish and the witty. Morning and afternoon sales follow (Nov. 16). (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ **Phillips's** two-part sale of contemporary art (Nov. 16-17) is devoted mostly to artists working in the last few decades, with works by Mike Kelley, Charles Ray, and Richard Prince as well as by a newer generation of artists, such as Banks Violette, Hernan Bas, and Mark Handforth. (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.) ♦ Marisa Berenson, the melancholy beauty in "Barry Lyndon" and "Death in Venice," is auctioning off part of her wardrobe for charity (including pieces by Alaïa, Galliano, and Castelbajac) at **Doyle's** annual couture sale (Nov. 16). (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)



MICHAEL WELDON

The Microscopic Septet will reunite at Joe's Pub.

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
CZECHING IN
Nov. 30-Dec. 10

BAM presents two weeks of rarely viewed works from the National Film Archive in Prague that display the advanced styles of Czech filmmaking from 1926 through 1949. Among the highlights are Gustav Machatý's silent version of "The Kreutzer Sonata," Herbert Kline's "Crisis," from 1938, about the rise of Nazism, and "The Distant Journey," by Alfred Radok, one of the first dramas about the Holocaust. (718-636-4100.)

NIGHT LIFE
LUCKY SEVEN
Dec. 2

The Microscopic Septet, which featured two of the most sophisticated and stylistically slippery jazz composers and players—the pianist Joel Forrester and the saxophonist Phillip Johnston—reigned on the downtown music scene in the late eighties and early nineties. To celebrate the release of two career-spanning retrospective double albums, "Seven Men in Neckties" and "Surrealistic Swing," the group is reuniting for a brief tour that comes to Joe's Pub. (212-967-7555.)

ART
BEST MOUSETRAPS
Dec. 8-July 29

The Cooper-Hewitt's third National Design Triennial will collect the most impressive examples of American design from the last three years, in fields ranging from medical technology to fashion, computer graphics to architecture, robotics to textiles. (212-849-8400.)

THE THEATRE
FÊTE ACCOMPLI
Dec. 14

Tony Shalhoub and Patricia Heaton star in "The Scene," Theresa Rebeck's satire of New York party stalwarts and wannabes. The play is directed by Rebecca Taichman. (212-246-4422.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
ACROSS THE DIVIDE
Dec. 19

Daniel Barenboim created the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra to give young Israeli and Arab players a chance to understand each other through music. He will conduct them in works by Beethoven, Mozart, and Brahms at Carnegie Hall. (212-247-7800.)

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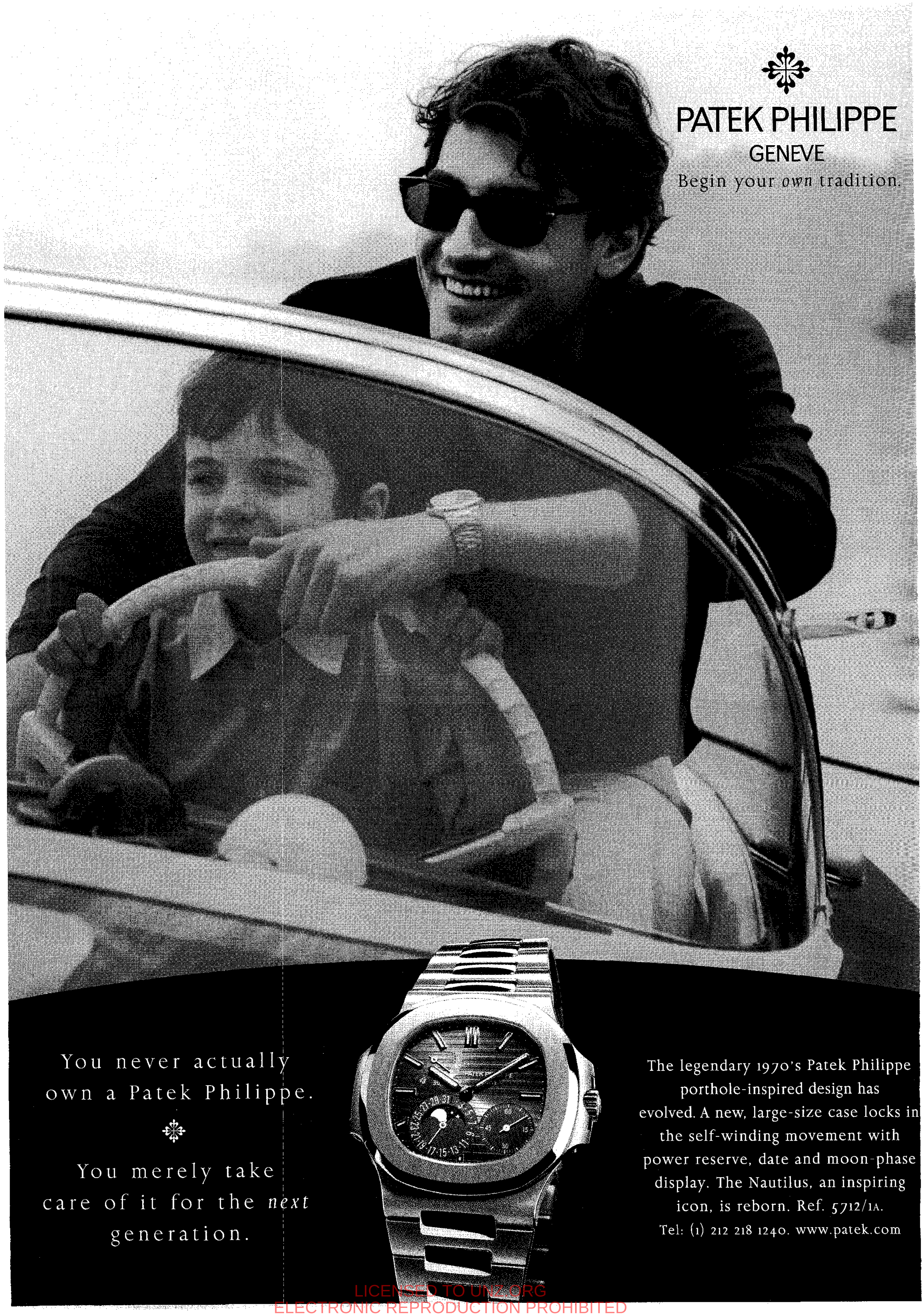

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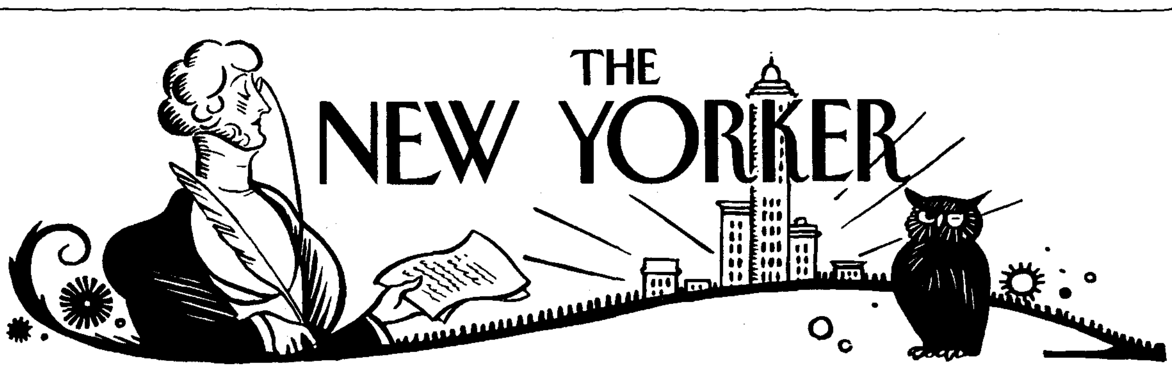
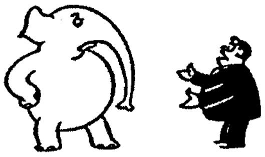


THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
THUMP

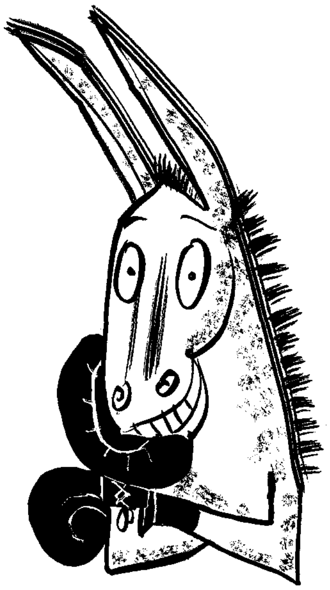


Interviewing President Bush aboard Air Force One a few days before his second inauguration, a Washington *Post* reporter noted that American forces in Iraq had neither been welcomed as liberators nor found any of the promised weapons of mass destruction. "The postwar process hasn't gone as well as some had hoped," the reporter ventured. "Why hasn't anyone been held accountable, either through firings or demotions, for what some people see as mistakes or misjudgments?" The President's reply—as iconically Bushian as "Bring 'em on"—came to mind last Tuesday night as the big blue waves started rolling in. "Well," he said back then, "we had an accountability moment, and that's called the 2004 election."

Actually, it was more like an impunity moment. "Let me put it to you this way," Bush had said the day after John Kerry's concession. "I earned capital in the campaign—political capital—and now I intend to spend it." And spend it he did. Whatever he had left over after he blew a wad trying to turn Social Security into a bonanza for the financial-services industry was squandered on an unending skein of assurances that the war in Iraq was going fine. By last week, the coffers were empty, and not even the hurried-up sentencing of Saddam Hussein to be hanged by the neck until dead could refill them. The accountability moment had arrived at last.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Americans have had enough, and their disgust with the Administration and its congressional enablers turned out to be so powerful that even the battered, rusty, sound-bit, TV-spotted, Diebolded old seismograph of an American midterm election was able to register it. Thanks to the computer-aided gerrymandering that is the only truly modern feature of our electoral machinery, the number of seats that changed hands was not particularly high by historical standards. Voters—actual people—are a truer measure of the swing's magnitude. In 2000, the last time this year's thirty-three Senate seats were up for grabs, the popular-vote totals in those races, like the popular-vote totals for President, were essentially a tie. Democrats got forty-eight per cent of the vote, Republicans slightly more than forty-seven per cent. This time, in those same thirty-three states, Democrats got fifty-five per cent of the vote, Republicans not quite forty-three per cent. In raw numbers, the national Democratic plurality in the 2000 senatorial races was the same as Al Gore's: around half a million. This time, despite the inevitably smaller off-year turnout and the fact that there were Senate races in only two-thirds of the states, it was more than seven million.



This election was a crushing rebuke to Bush and his party. The rest is interpretation. Nearly everyone agreed that public anger about the Iraq catastrophe was paramount. To the surprise of much of the political class, exit polls suggested that corruption was almost as formidable a factor, especially among Independents and disaffected Republicans. On the right, some commentators complained that the G.O.P.'s problem was that it hadn't been conservative enough: too much spending, too much nation-building, too much foot-dragging on abortion and the like. Others took comfort in the hypothesis that, because a number of Tuesday's new faces are Democrats of a (relatively) conservative stripe, the election was actually a victory for the ideology, if not the party, of George W. Bush. In a blog post titled "All's Well on the Conservative Front," Lawrence Kudlow, of *National Review*, pointed to the “conservative Blue Dog Dems who won a whole bunch of seats” as proof that “Republicans may have lost—but the conservative ascendancy is still alive and well.”

Maybe. Or maybe those Blue Dogs won’t hunt. In truth, the great majority of Capitol Hill’s new Democrats will be what used to be called liberals, and in every case Tuesday’s Republican losers were more conservative than the Democrats who beat them. Moreover, the fate of ballot initiatives around the country suggests that, on balance, the conservative tide may be ebbing. In six states, mostly out West, proposals to raise the minimum wage won easily. Yes, seven ballot measures banning same-sex marriage passed, albeit by smaller margins than has been the pattern; but one, in Arizona, was defeated—the first time that has happened anywhere. Missourians voted to support embryonic-stem-cell research. Californians and Oregonians rejected proposals to require parental notification for young women seeking abortions, and the voters of South Dakota overturned a law, passed by the state legislature and signed by the governor eight months ago, that forbade abortion, including in cases of rape or incest, except when absolutely necessary to save the mother’s life. Rick Santorum, the Senate’s most energetic social conservative, went down to overwhelming defeat—man on dog won’t hunt, either, apparently.

A more persuasive analysis than the all’s-well theory holds that Tuesday’s debacle reveals the limitations of the “mobilize the base” strategy, which Karl Rove devised on behalf of his boss, and which has required the Republican Party to entrust itself entirely to a hard core of taxophobes, Christianists, and dittoheads. Rove’s strategy, this analysis suggests, seemed to work only in 2000 (when Bush came in second at the ballot box) and in 2002 and 2004 (when its weaknesses were masked by fear of terrorism). Traditionally, America’s two big political parties have been loose coalitions, one center-left and one center-right. Rove transformed the Republicans into something resembling a European-style parliamentary party of the right, politically disciplined and ideologically uniform. This year, in response, many on the center-right acted like Europeans, too: they voted not the man (or woman) but the party (Democratic). That sealed the fate of Rhode Island’s popular senator Lincoln Chafee, among other remnants of moderate Republicanism. For the center part of the center-right, there was nowhere to go except to the center part of the center-left.

The day after the election, at a press conference in the East Room of the White House, the curtain rose on Act III of “Oedipus Bush.” On one level, the current President Bush was all crisp decisiveness as he announced the replacement of his Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, with Robert Gates, a former C.I.A. director and the president of Texas A. & M. University. Below the surface, but only a little below, something altogether more unsettling was going on. Rumsfeld was one of the first President Bush’s least favorite people; Gates is one of his most trusted confidants. He is also an active member of the Iraq Study Group, which is headed by another of the father’s intimates, James Baker. The group’s report, expected in the New Year, will offer the outlines of a different course in Iraq—an offer the President may be unable to refuse. At the Pentagon, Rumsfeld yields to Gates; in the Oval Office, adolescent rebellion gives way to sullen acquiescence.

Bush said some of the right things at his press conference, but he chose his words carelessly. He congratulated the “Democrat leaders” and promised bipartisanship—a goal he is unlikely to advance by referring to his hoped-for new partners by a name calculated solely to annoy them. Impressions are inherently subjective, of course; but he looked like a man who at that moment would much prefer to be commissioner of baseball, the job he longed for in 1993, before falling back on running for governor of Texas. It has been obvious for some time that, as President of the United States, George W. Bush is in very far over his head. He does not know how to use power wisely. He will now have a Democratic Congress to restrain him, and, perhaps, to protect him—and us—from his unfettered impulses. This may not be the Thanksgiving he was looking forward to, but the rest of us have reason to be grateful.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

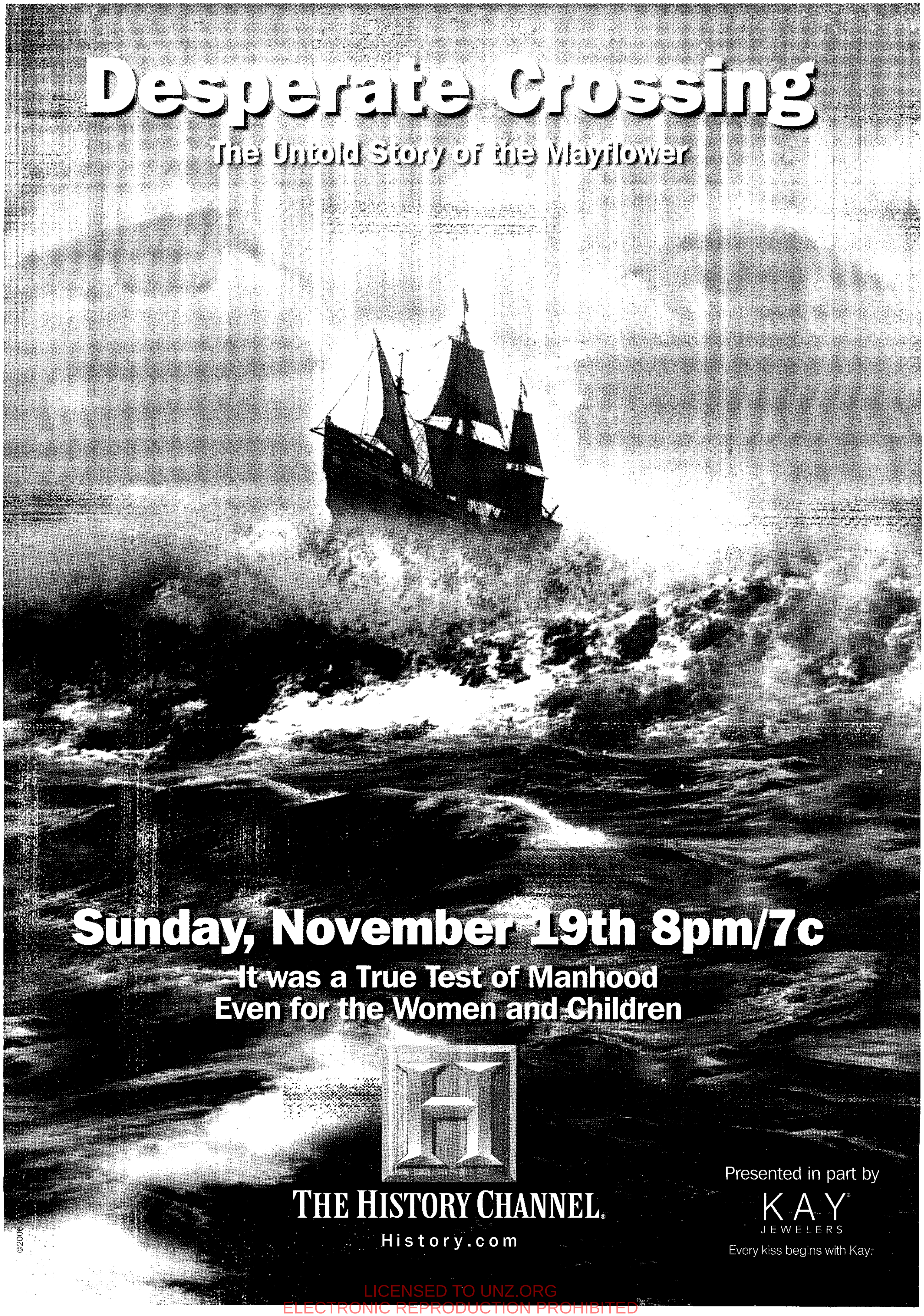
INNER OFFICE
END OF THE AFFAIR

Two months ago, Kenneth Adelman, the former director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, received a call from the Pentagon: Donald Rumsfeld would like to see him as soon as possible. Adelman said he knew then that this meeting might be their last.

The two men had been friends for thirty-six years. Adelman first worked for Rumsfeld in the Nixon Administration, and then served as Rumsfeld’s assistant during his more rewarding term as the Secretary of Defense, under President Ford. Rumsfeld drafted Adelman to help him in his brief, ineffectual campaign for President, in 1988. Their families sometimes spent vacations together, and Rumsfeld continued to call on Adelman for advice. In 2001, Rumsfeld appointed his friend to the Defense Policy Board, a group of lobbyists, defense intellectuals, and politicians of once high standing, who gather periodically to give the Secretary unvarnished advice on strategy and management.

Rumsfeld had apparently come to see Adelman’s advice as a bit too unvarnished. Before the war, Adelman famously remarked that the invasion would be a “cakewalk.” He wasn’t wrong about that. Seizing Baghdad was comparatively easy; holding it quickly became the problem. “When Rumsfeld said, in reaction to all the looting, ‘Stuff happens,’ and ‘That’s what free people do,’ I was just so disappointed,” Adelman recalled last week. “This wasn’t what free people did; it’s what barbarians did.” Within the confines of the policy board, Adelman became blunt about his disenchantment with the Pentagon’s management of the war. At the board’s meeting this summer, Adelman said, he argued that the American military needed a new strategy.

“I suggested that we were losing the war,” Adelman said. “What was astonishing to me was the number of Iraqi professional people who were leaving the country. People were voting with their feet, and I said that it looked like we



Desperate Crossing

The Untold Story of the Mayflower

Sunday, November 19th 8pm/7c

It was a True Test of Manhood
Even for the Women and Children

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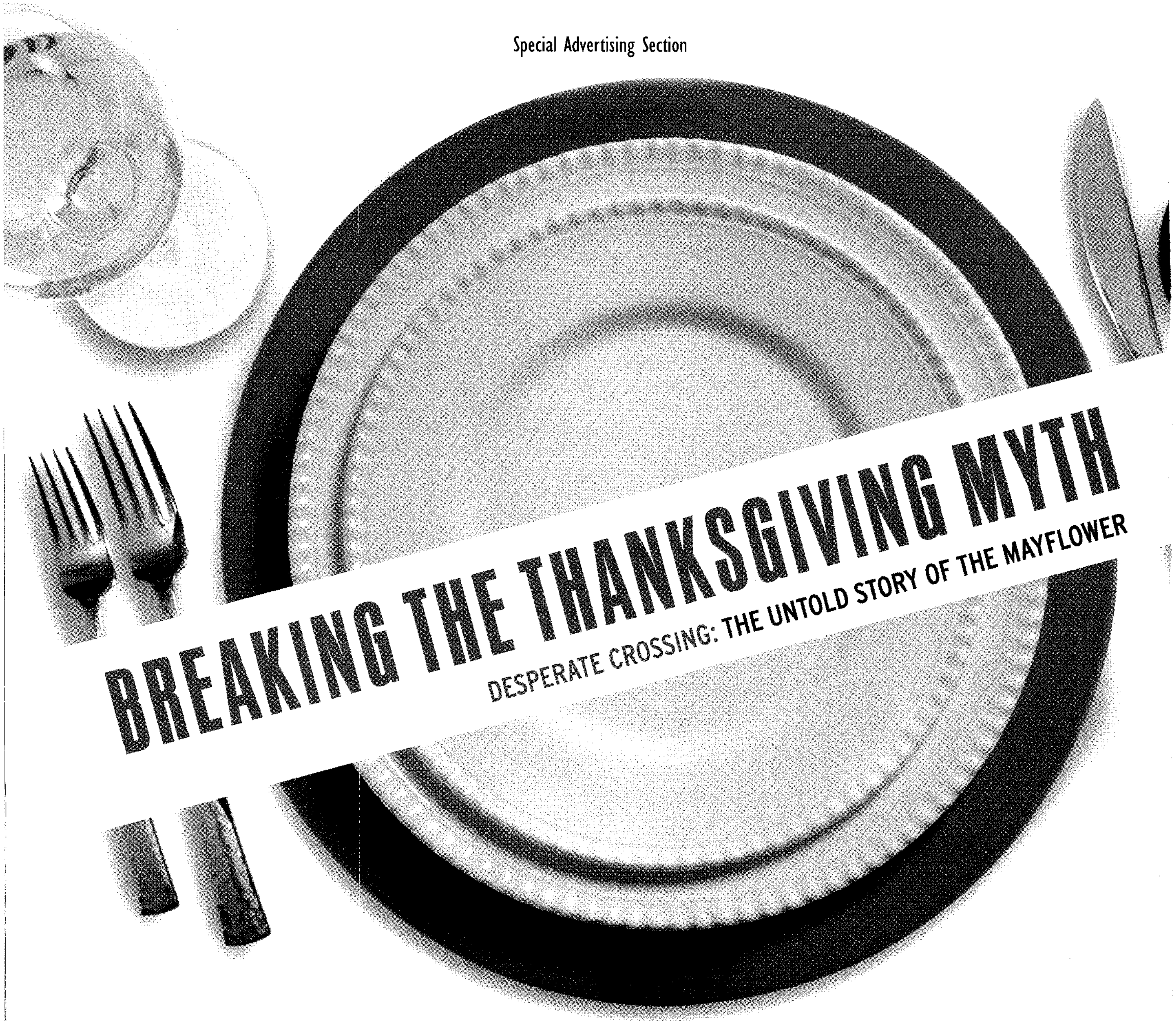


BREAKING THE THANKSGIVING MYTH

DESPERATE CROSSING: THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE MAYFLOWER

Planning the voyage took several years, and for some of the passengers sailing to America took their entire life savings. By the time the Mayflower landed in Plymouth harbor after two months of travel, a Pilgrim scouting party had already committed grave-robbing and theft. The settlers disembarked riddled with scurvy, and weakened by the miserable shipboard conditions. Half would die in the next four months. The feast we know as the first Thanksgiving lasted over three days and it depleted the settlement's marginal food supply as winter was closing in.

As explored in the upcoming History Channel documentary **Desperate Crossing: the Untold Story of the Mayflower**, making its début Sunday, November 19th at 8 P.M. ET/PT, so much more lies between the broad strokes we've been taught in school about the Pilgrims. Here, we learn that the Mayflower had been designed only for cargo. Passengers were stuffed into the cave-like, windowless area between decks with all of their possessions and various livestock, and there was barely any room to move, for many weeks on end. Voyagers encountered Atlantic storms so bad that the ship was forced to drift where the winds would take it. Worse, the Mayflower developed leaks. During one storm, a main beam in its midsection cracked, causing many to wonder if the ship would make it.

Going deeper into the facts than any previous documentary, "Desperate Crossing" is based on meticulous historical research and original source material, including diaries and firsthand accounts, to recreate the pilgrims' lives in all their complexity. "Desperate Crossing" explodes time-honored myths about this determined band, including their relationship with the Native Americans, once they landed at Plymouth. Inflamed by years of violent discrimination, the Pilgrims came to New England armed and ready for a hostile reception.

Beyond the traditional stories of Squanto and Massasoit sharing in the bounty of the first Thanksgiving is a far more ambivalent relationship that required a great deal of diplomacy and mutual self-interest. It's all detailed here for the first time—with the excitement and suspense of a feature film.

needed a Plan B. I said, 'What's the alternative? Because what we're doing now is just losing.'"

Adelman said that Rumsfeld didn't take to the message well. "He was in deep denial—deep, deep denial. And then he did a strange thing. He did fifteen or twenty minutes of posing questions to himself, and then answering them. He made the statement that we can only lose the war in America, that we can't lose it in Iraq. And I tried to interrupt this interrogatory soliloquy to say, 'Yes, we *are* actually losing the war in Iraq.' He got upset and cut me off. He said, 'Excuse me,' and went right on with it."

The meeting ended disagreeably. In any case, the two men had stopped socializing some time ago. Adelman's wife, Carol, hoped to maintain the friendship, but he had become unsure. "On Christmas in 2005," Adelman said, "Don invited us over for a small gathering, but by that time I couldn't go. Carol went. I was feeling too much pain by then."

When Adelman went to see Rumsfeld in his office, he knew that Rumsfeld wanted him out. "He said, 'Ken, you've been my friend for most of my adult life,' and he said that I was going to be his friend for the rest of his life," Adelman recalled. "Then he said, 'It might be best if you got off the Defense Policy Board.' I said, 'It won't be best for me. If you want me off, it's not a problem, but if it's up to me I'll stay on.' He wanted me to resign. He didn't want to do it himself. And so we did that little dance."

Adelman went on, "Rumsfeld said, 'You've become disruptive and negative.' Well, I got a little flustered and said, 'That's bullshit about being disruptive. Negative, you've got right.' He responded by saying, 'Well, you interrupt people in the meetings.' And I said, 'You know where I learned that from? I learned that from the master.'" Rumsfeld laughed, Adelman said.

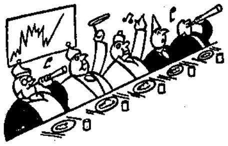
"I had the floor then, and I started by saying what a positive influence he had been in my life, that I love him like a brother. He nodded, kind of sadly. And then I said, 'I'm negative about two things: the deflection of responsibility, and the quality of decisions.' He said he took responsibility all the time. Then I talked about two decisions: the way he handled the looting, and Abu Ghraib. He told me that he didn't remember saying, 'Stuff happens.' He was really in denial that this was his fault." Adelman said that it struck him then that "maybe he really thinks that things are going well in Iraq."

No conclusions were reached at the meeting, and there was no further communication from Rumsfeld until shortly before the election, Adelman said. Rumsfeld sent him a letter, which reads, "As we discussed when we met, we are moving ahead on the Defense Policy Board and we'll be naming a replacement for your spot in the next week or two. I appreciate your cooperation." It was signed "Regards, Donald Rumsfeld." (Rumsfeld's office did not return telephone calls seeking comment.)

A few days later, Rumsfeld was out. Adelman is, apparently, still in. "I'm heartsick about the whole matter," he said. He does not know what to make of the disintegration of Rumsfeld's career and reputation. "How could this happen to someone so good, so competent?" he said. "This war made me doubt the past. Was I wrong all those years, or was he just better back then? The Donald Rumsfeld of today is not the Donald Rumsfeld I knew, but maybe I was wrong about the old Donald Rumsfeld. It's a terrible way to end a career. It's hard to remember, but he was once the future."

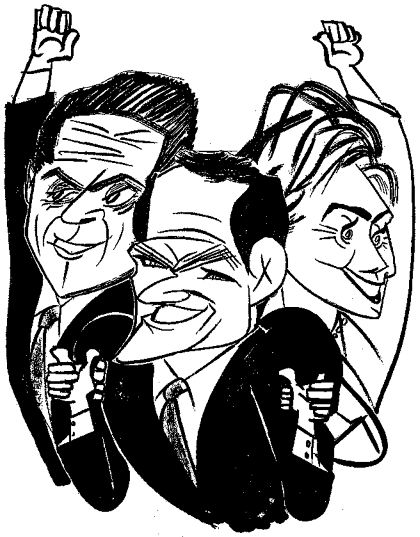
—*Jeffrey Goldberg*

ELECTION NIGHT DIARY
PARTY ANIMALS



Political contests are generally thought of as binary affairs: a candidate runs as a Democrat or as a Republican, gets more votes or doesn't, stays up to celebrate or concedes and goes to bed. Last week, in New York, the former scenarios prevailed for the Democratic slate of Hillary Clinton, Eliot Spitzer, Andrew Cuomo, and Alan Hevesi. But, even among the triumphant, there were winners and there were losers. Perhaps nowhere were the nuances of popularity and power more apparent than in Tuesday's various victory parties.

An early stop, for the Election Night schmoozer, was an event organized by the Hevesi campaign. Several weeks earlier, Hevesi, the incumbent candidate for state comptroller, had admitted to using a state employee as his wife's chauffeur. Thus disinvited from a big bash being held at the Sheraton for the rest of the ticket, he'd holed up at a hotel on Thirty-eighth Street. The scene was subdued: stained carpet and no refreshments. ("A lot of people keep asking me where the drinks are," a porter named Alex said. "They don't even have water.") The name of the place—the Jolly Madison Towers—underscored the air of forced gaiety.



Cuomo, Spitzer, and Clinton

At eight o'clock, Nadine Schramm, a trucking executive and a Hevesi supporter, was one of a half-dozen people watching CNN in the hotel bar. She had bumped into the former mayor of Buffalo earlier in the day. "He said, 'Tell Alan that Tony from Buffalo said hello.'" Tony from Buffalo, she reported, was going to be spending the evening at the Sheraton.

"You don't walk from friends," she went on, explaining why she'd bothered to show up. Schramm's rationale was typical of Hevesi partygoers, who tended to frame their attendance in negative terms—why they didn't want to not be there. Nevertheless, several Hevesi guests decided to flee for the Clinton/Spitzer/Cuomo jamboree (which had taken on the exclusive allure of a partisan Playboy

Mansion). Now, *this* was a party: patriotically colored balloons, free-flowing booze, bouncers turning away even those with “Honored Guest” passes in favor of Sheldon Silver and Steven Van Zandt.

Once the state races had all been called, the sound system began blaring “Get Up, Stand Up,” and the lieutenant governor-elect, David Paterson, took the stage. (His brush with reggae came off better than that of the losing Connecticut senatorial candidate Ned Lamont, who, while canvassing New Haven the previous week, walked into a Jamaican restaurant and asked, “So, do you guys like Bob Marley?”) Paterson was followed by Spitzer, who delivered stentorian assurances along with the odd jubilant shout-out. “As they say on my favorite TV show, Boo-yah!” he yelled to a mystified crowd.

Upstairs in Room 4431, Congressman Jerrold Nadler, of New York City’s Eighth District, was hosting a private party. “He’s a political numbers savant,” a staffer said. “He actually needs to hear the numbers and see them exactly.” When an anchor on the unobstructed television screen confirmed that the Democrats had taken the House, Nadler’s eyes filled with tears.

“Jerry, I’ve never seen anybody look as happy as you,” a constituent said, presenting Nadler with a bottle of champagne. A guest brought up having been at the Hevesi party. “That must have been weird,” someone said. “He’s saying, ‘I want to govern for four more years,’ and everybody’s going, ‘Yeah, four more *days*.’ ”

Meanwhile, in Harlem, Representative Charles Rangel’s party, at the seafood restaurant Pier 2110, was turning out to be the night’s hot ticket. Early on, a couple of City Council workers had complained about being stuck there. “We’re like seat fillers at the Oscars,” one said. But, as word got out about the generous spread (champagne, sushi), people began flocking uptown.

Rangel, who stands to gain control of the Ways and Means Committee with the Democratic takeover, was basking in the adulation of his supporters. “I love that button, Congressman!” someone shouted, referring to Rangel’s lapel pin, which said “BUSH,” with a red slash through it. One woman jumped over a couch to give him a hug.

Rangel seemed to relish playing the pasha, and said that he would not be leaving to visit other dignitaries. “I was born and raised here,” he said. “I can’t go anywhere.” Spitzer, in the end, came to Rangel. He arrived at around midnight. “The Governor!” Rangel said, clasping his hand. Five minutes later, Spitzer and his entourage piled into a pair of black Suburbans and sped off in the rain.

—*Lauren Collins*

WIND ON CAPITOL HILL
A CONGRESSMAN’S ENIGMA

If the new Democratic majority in Congress decides to hold hearings to investigate how flawed intelligence led the Bush Administration into war in Iraq, one freshman congressman may find himself in a tricky situation. “I’d be in a unique position, certainly,” Chris Carney, a congressman-elect from Pennsylvania, said last week.

Before he was elected to Congress on an antiwar platform, Carney had served in the Pentagon, where he was a senior counterterrorism-and-intelligence adviser in the Policy Counterterrorism Evaluation Group, an office set up by Douglas J. Feith, then the Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy. Many critics of President Bush consider the group to be responsible for some of the least reliable and most inflammatory intelligence in the run-up to the Iraq war.

Critics say that the purpose of the office was to find links between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein that could be used to justify a preëmptive war against Iraq.

“I was looking at terrorist links between Al Qaeda and state sponsors of terrorism, including Iraq,” Carney said. “On a scale of zero to ten, where zero would be none and ten would be operational control,” he said, the ties between Saddam and Al Qaeda “were about a two and a half.” He went on, “Saddam had links to every terrorist group in the region. I still think there were links to Al Qaeda.”

Carney is an associate professor of political science at Penn State and a reserve officer in the U.S. Navy. He admitted that while he worked at the Pentagon he also endorsed the widespread but mistaken belief that Saddam was concealing an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. “We were just one voice in the process,” he explained last week.

At first, Carney supported the war in Iraq. But in light of subsequent research he changed his mind. “I was asked by the Pentagon to research how Saddam would fight us,” he said. “The intelligence suggested that it would be an insurgency.” He said that when he tried to warn his superiors about this they were dismissive. “They’d say, ‘Oh, that’s interesting—but we’ve got it under control.’ That really annoyed me,” he said.

As the insurgency grew in Iraq and the Bush Administration failed to deal with it, Carney’s disenchantment intensified. Last year, he said, one of his students, who had served in Iraq, told him that the troops were so poorly equipped that they scrounged around in Iraqi junk yards for scrap metal to use as armor. “We didn’t prepare for it,” Carney said. “We were needlessly jeopardizing the lives of U.S. troops.”

Carney, an outspoken critic of the Bush Administration’s war efforts in a rural, conservative district, wasn’t expected to win the election. But last year the campaign of his opponent, Republican Congressman Don Sherwood, suffered a setback when he admitted to having had a five-year extramarital affair with a much younger woman. (He denied allegations that he tried to choke her while giving her a back rub.) President Bush stumped for Sherwood in an unsuccessful effort to save his seat. Carney had some awkward campaign moments of his own, including a New York fund-raiser last month, where his antiwar supporters must have been surprised to see, among his contributors, an old friend from Washington, Richard Perle, one of the most vociferous proponents of the war.

Carney said that if Congress ends up investigating the role his Pentagon office played in supplying flawed intelligence, he won’t know which side of the table to sit on. “Maybe I’ll ask myself some tough questions,” he said with a laugh.

—*Jane Mayer*

THE FINANCIAL PAGE

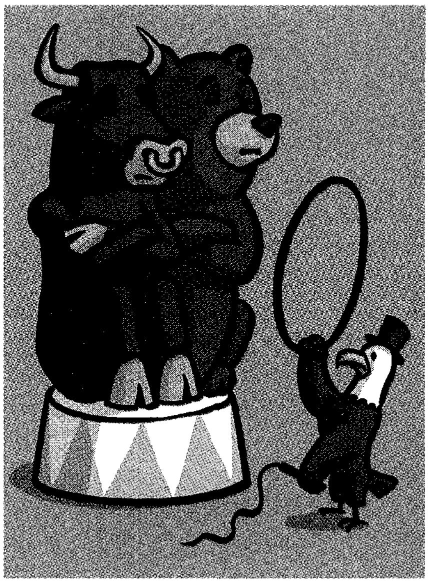
ELECTIVE ECONOMIES

In the days leading up to the midterm elections, Republicans spread a simple message. "If the Democrats take control," Dick Cheney warned, "the economy would sustain a major hit." Wall Street pundits forecast a future of tax hikes and new regulations, and suggested that if Democrats took both the House and the Senate there would be a "major stock sell-off." But the day after the elections stock prices went up. If disaster is looming, investors can't see it.

Perhaps the market is just blithely ignorant. But it's more likely that investors understand what the pundits don't: while we hold politicians responsible for things like the rate of economic growth and unemployment, in the short run they generally have little influence on the economy as a whole. There are some interesting patterns in U.S. history—economic growth, for instance, tends to be stronger in the first years of Democratic administrations than in Republican ones—but the effects of such trends are small. And changing congressional majorities seem to have even less impact than changing administrations. Voters might expect that a dramatic power shift like the one we saw on Tuesday would have profound consequences for the economy. But it almost certainly won't.

In part, this is because Congress is limited in the tools it can use (especially if a President is likely to veto its initiatives). Monetary policy is controlled by the Federal Reserve Board, which is essentially independent of political pressure. It hasn't always been this way. In 1971, for instance, Fed chair Arthur Burns began to cut interest rates, which kept the economy growing briskly into the next year's election. Republicans in Congress could certainly have used a couple of interest-rate cuts this year, but there was never a possibility that the Fed would oblige. And while Congress does have the power to tax and spend, changes in spending and taxation typically have only a marginal impact on short-term economic performance, because they're too small to have much effect on what's now a thirteen-trillion-dollar economy. Nor is there any obvious connection between changes in policy and economic outcomes: Congress raised taxes in 1993, and the economy boomed. It cut taxes in 2001, and the economy grew briskly then, too.

Elections are also unlikely to bring major economic changes, because when it comes to macroeconomic questions Democrats and Republicans are simply not that far apart. The Democrats will block any attempt to extend tax cuts for the wealthy, but they've shown no interest in returning tax rates to where they were when, say, Ronald Reagan took office. Both parties seem to accept that the Fed's most important job is keeping inflation under control. Both pay lip service to balanced budgets (although the Democrats appear more committed to them in practice). There's no movement to restore the kind of elaborate regulations that governed much of the American economy until the nineteen-seventies. And although the new Congress will likely take a harder line on trade agreements than its predecessors, there's little talk of resurrecting the stringent tariffs or quotas that were once routine.



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Republicans like to indict Democrats as anti-corporate zealots. But in 1994, when the Democrats lost control of the House and the Senate, the stock market reacted with indifference, not glee—prices scarcely budged. A study of Presidential elections since 1928, conducted by the finance professors Pedro Santa-Clara and Rossen Valkanov, found no systematic difference in the way the market has reacted to the election of Democratic and Republican candidates. A more recent study, which examined market reaction to unexpected outcomes in Presidential elections, suggests that investors do expect returns to be slightly greater under Republican administrations, but, again, the difference is small.

It's foolish, then, to expect elections to cure ailing economies or wreck healthy ones. But this doesn't mean that they're irrelevant. Fiscal policy may not make a big difference in the short run, but in the long run its effects can be dramatic. (The $1.4 trillion in public debt we've accumulated during the past five years will eventually have to be dealt with.) And while the ascent of the Democrats may not change the over-all performance of the economy, it will change who wins and loses within it. The new Congress intends to take action to mitigate the impact of increasing inequality: raising the minimum wage, increasing college-tuition tax credits, keeping the estate tax intact, and rejecting Social Security privatization. It may also target industries that are perceived as holding inordinate power over consumers, including the oil and the pharmaceutical industries. It would be very surprising, for instance, if the new Congress did not try to repeal the current law barring Medicare from bargaining for lower prices with drug companies.

As far as the economy as a whole is concerned, the impact of most of these initiatives (with the obvious exception of protecting Social Security) will be trivial. But their impact on the everyday lives of many Americans could be substantial, because they represent an attempt to deal with the most troubling economic fact of recent times—namely, that, even as the economy has flourished, most Americans have seen their real incomes stagnate or even fall. In the past twenty-four years, the U.S. has had only two recessions, both brief, so policymakers have done a good job of figuring out how to keep the economy running smoothly. But they've often done less well when it comes to making sure that the fruits of that economy are shared. This election won't change the size of the pie, but it may change how it gets sliced.

—*James Surowiecki*

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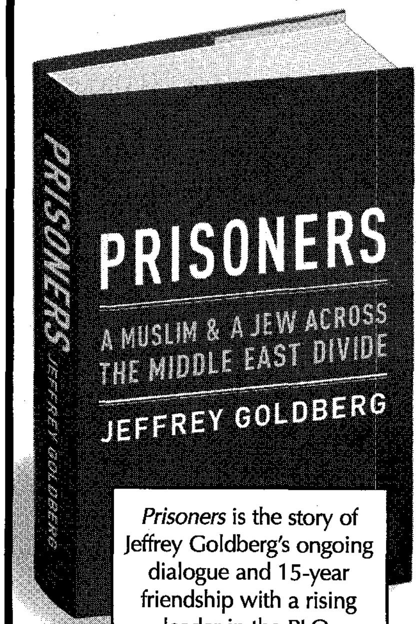
PRISONERS
A MUSLIM & A JEW ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST DIVIDE
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NOTES OF A GASTRONOME

TALKING TURKEY

The man who communicates with gobblers.

BY BILL BUFORD

Joe Hutto, who is sixty-one, has spent most of his waking life looking at wild turkeys. He may have looked at more of them than any other living American, with the "possible exception" of Lovett E. Williams, Jr., a wildlife biologist, and the bird's principal, and probably only, lifelong authority. Hutto is a trained wildlife biologist, too. He is an archeologist as well. He has also managed a zoo in Panama City ("heavy on the reptiles") and a ranch in Wyoming (a thousand head of cattle), and been an elk-hunting guide, a competitive springboard diver, a dog handler (Labradors), a horse trainer, a landscape painter, an antiquities scuba diver, and a venomous-snake catcher (three dollars a foot for rattlers, a dollar for water moccasins). But mainly he has been a student of the wild, especially birds, and has come up with some surprisingly unconventional ways of conducting his studies.

Thirteen years ago, Hutto, who was living near the Panhandle coast of Florida, heard that a tractor-driver, clearing some land, kept finding wild-turkey eggs. All his life, Hutto had wanted to raise his own wild turkeys. The process—in which you convince newborn animals that you are their parent—is known as imprinting, named by Konrad Lorenz in 1935, after he had raised greylag geese from wild eggs. Many zoologists believe that it was through imprinting, or something like it, that societies took once wild animals, like the wolf, and domesticated them into household pets, like the dog. Hutto first applied the practice (without knowing it was a "practice") when he was ten years old, having come upon a baby squirrel, its eyes closed, and fed it with a nursing bottle. "You figure into the physiology of the brain of the animal—no longer a cute, furry thing in the woods but a creature with its own psychology and way of seeing the world." Since then, Hutto has raised hawks, coyotes, owls (three kinds), crows, rats ("One of earth's great generalists, like the cockroach, the coyote, and the human"—meaning that their diet and habitat are not locale-specific but can be virtually anything and that they are therefore capable of surviving almost anywhere), mice, rabbits, opossums, foxes ("no creature more intense, more deliberate, or more uncompromising"), bobcats, black bears ("I still haven't raised a grizzly," he lamented, although he was almost killed by grizzlies several times, having been unable to contain his curiosity whenever he came upon one and compulsively giving chase, oblivious that he was pursuing a female, say, and that the smaller versions running alongside were cubs), elk, a stump-tailed macaque, deer (four kinds), and monkeys. Recently, he raised wood ducks. He'd been walking through a park—Hutto has a home next to the St. Mark's National Wildlife Refuge, about thirty miles from Tallahassee—spotted a nest that had been exposed and crushed in a storm, and swooped the ducklings up in his arms. ("A highly illegal act—you don't steal animals from a game reserve, even if the mother isn't there. I just thought, I will never have this opportunity again.") At home, he put them in a wire cage and lay down on the ground next to it, perching his head on a corner. The ducklings had huddled, terrified, on the far side. He continued to stare, not moving. After thirty minutes, they started staring back. ("It was my eyes, they'd become aware of my eyes, and found in them whatever they needed.") Then, in a mysteriously spontaneous rush, they streaked across the cage and huddled up against his face: imprinting had started.

Hutto's wild-turkey flock began when he found sixteen eggs on his doorstep left by the tractor-driver. Hutto knew how difficult the eggs were to come by: hens, once impregnated, walk until they discover a site out of the way enough to make a nest and don't leave it unless aggressively chased off by a predator. Five days later, the driver left thirteen more eggs—all together, an astonishing bounty. For most of the next week, Hutto tended his stash, keeping it warm, talking to it (variations on "*yelp, yelp*," to begin the imprinting process), until the poults were hatched. ("Poults" are chicks; "jakes" are young males; "gobblers," adult males.) Then he raised them. Effectively, Hutto turned himself into a turkey. He walked like one. He went up into a tree like one. He learned to hunt for bugs like one. Without instruments or recordings, he learned also to talk like one, modulating his vocal cords to match the complex, almost musical notes that now surrounded him. "A language of not just thirteen basic sounds that some experts had identified but many subdivisions within those categories of sound, a vocabulary of at least fifty different kinds of verbal instruction. I spoke to them and they, in turn, talked to me, too."

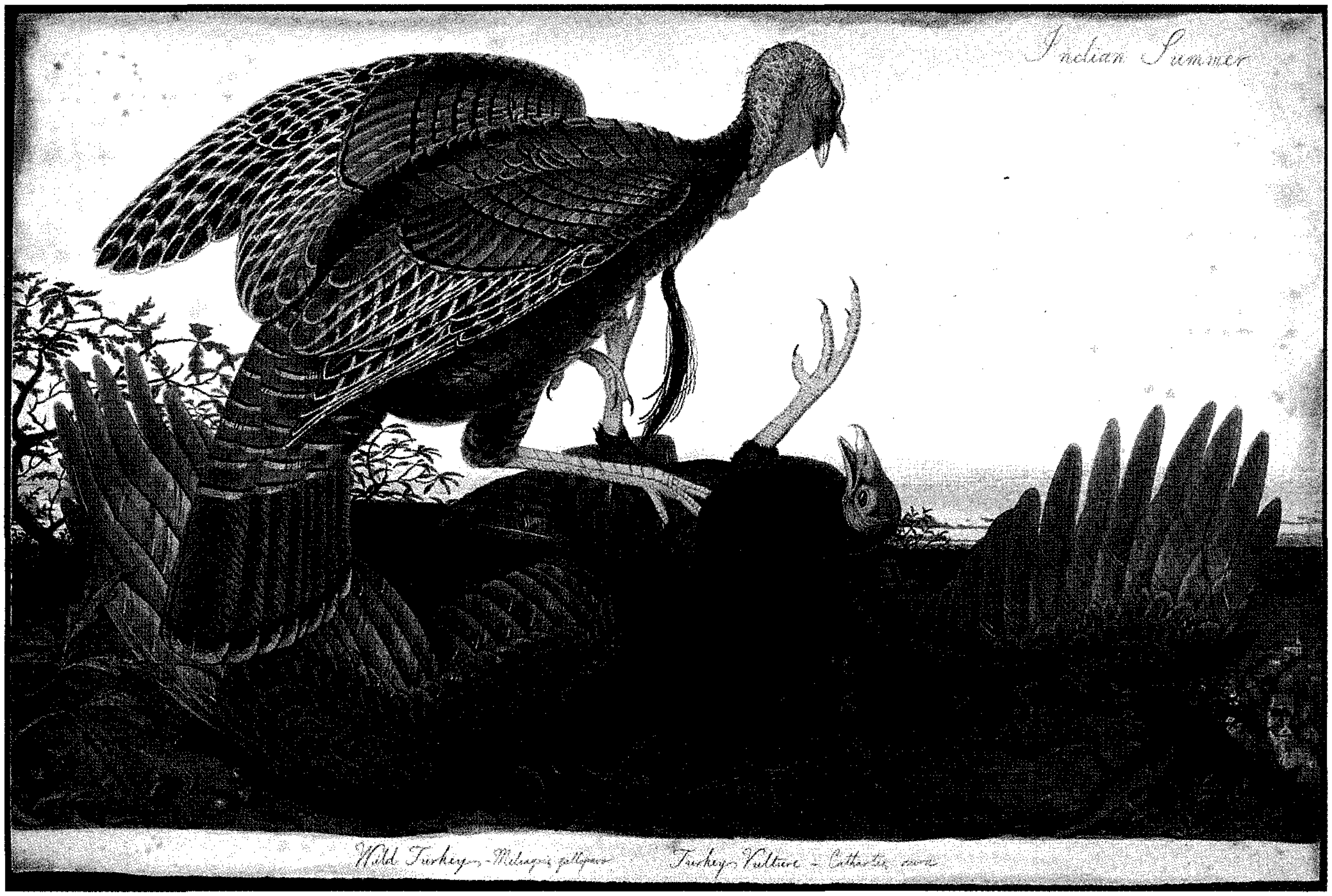
When Hutto told me this, we were sitting at a handmade table in his home, a cabin he'd constructed from scratch three years ago, his fourth. ("I don't know why, but every few years I find myself having to build myself a new home"—Hutto has been married three times.) An image rose up in my mind of a bird version of Mister Ed, the talking horse. Joe Hutto acts like a normal man, but normal people don't talk to animals and understand their replies.

"Not long ago, I gave a reading at the Museum of Florida," Hutto explained. He had kept a field journal of his time with the turkeys and wrote it up as a book, "Illumination in the Flatwoods," which was published eleven years ago. The book was scarcely noticed nationally, and is now out of print, but it made its author into a local celebrity. (On Amazon, used copies start at ninety-nine dollars and forty-three cents.) "It was a fundraiser attended by everyone in Tallahassee high society, very formal, very stuffy, and I was very uncomfortable. At the end, I was asked to make a turkey sound. I did. I looked up and saw that the whole room, these men in dark suits, the women with their perfume, was staring at me very intently. I thought, I'm a clown." He looked at me plaintively. The look said, I know this seems crazy, but I really have conversations with wild turkeys.

I asked to see his turkey walk.

"No." My question pained him. "Please don't make me do this."

I stood up, hoping Hutto would join me (which he did eventually, and reluctantly demonstrated what amounted to an inconspicuous stroll, hands behind the back, done at the turkey's walking pace—the idea was not to be the bird as such, just not so obviously not one), and I found myself surveying his hand-built home, Smokey Bear browns and greens on the outside, cedar and hardwood floors within. The living room had a fireplace, with a nineteenth-century Appalachian rifle hanging above it and a round woven rug on the floor in front. On the facing wall were mounts of a mule deer and an elk. In the back, in Hutto's workroom, were massive black fossils—a mandible of a mastodon, the size of a tombstone; a fetal mammoth's tooth; a jaw of a piggy tapir: he'd pulled them out of the rivers nearby, along with hundreds of the spear points that had probably killed the animals. ("The mastodons and mammoths had no reason to die out. They're extinct because, ten thousand


Indian Summer
Wild Turkey - Meleagris gallopavo
Turkey Vulture - Cathartes aura

Some experts have identified thirteen basic sounds made by the turkey. Joe Hutto claims to have mastered fifty.

"INDIAN SUMMER" PAINTING BY WALTON FORD / PAUL KASMIN GALLERY, N.Y.

years ago, they were overhunted"—just as overhunting had almost eliminated the wild turkey.) There were arrowheads (hundreds), seventeenth-century Spanish clay pipes (the bowls still charcoal-blackened), hand-blown port bottles, "feather-edged china" (the ordinary plates of the early settlers), and drawers full of preserved birds, "study skins"—no bones, just skin and feathers. In fourth grade, Hutto had sent away for a mail-order taxidermy course, and was still applying its lessons. ("When I study a bird, I long for a precise, anatomically perfect understanding of where every feather is.") I held a blue-winged teal in my hand and thought, This is the Hardy Boys. This is the stuff and paraphernalia of adventure stories. Hutto is the first man in his sixties whom I would describe as boyish. He has a teen-ager's mustache, no gray hair, delicate shoulders, a small frame, and a light step. He reminded me of an antelope. For him, the world is still a treasure hunt. He made me think of Daniel Boone. Maybe he could talk turkey after all.

ADDRESS

Remember us, you not

yet here. Of the sparrow-colored
fields

of mid-November, we the
perceivers, the
sayers
and rememberers:

call us
to mind, say the words
in our name—

they are our name, who breathed

here in these underground cloud-
darkened wind-uttered
fields, and spoke
like you

each object's word.

—*Franz Wright*

The wild turkey is the most famous indigenous fowl of North America. You can now find it, or one of its domesticated descendants, just about anywhere on the globe—the bird, which reproduces reliably and plentifully, is another "generalist," able to survive in almost all conditions—but it originated on our continent about twenty million years ago, according to Hutto, and has evolved into five different kinds, each corresponding to the region it comes from: Eastern, Florida, Rio Grande (Texas), Merriam's (the West), and the Mexican, usually called a Gould's, after the zoologist who first studied it. The turkey eaten at the first Thanksgiving, in 1621, in Plymouth, Massachusetts, would have been a wild one of the Eastern variety—if a turkey was actually eaten. The evidence is famously meagre: a letter written on December 11th of that year by Edward Winslow, which was later included in his "Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth," and a history written by William Bradford, the governor of the colony. Bradford mentions wild turkeys; Winslow does not. Bradford was probably writing twenty years later, whereas Winslow's letter was probably two months after the event. (It is now accepted that a three-day outdoor feast, with a hundred and fifty people, was never held in stark, leafless late-November New England: if it's too cold for baseball, it's not warm enough for a picnic and a pajama party.)

According to Winslow's letter, the original Thanksgiving included a week's worth of "fowl" and five deer. A wild turkey could have been among the fowl, except there is no mention of turkeys anywhere else in the Pilgrim journal. This is curious, because there were plenty of them about (turkeys were among the first animals noticed by William Hilton, a passenger on the Fortune, which arrived in November of that year), and because Winslow loved his birds. Days after he arrived, on November 16, 1620, he (or his co-writer, the journal sometimes seeming to be a collaborative effort) notes six partridges, plus geese and ducks. Two days later, he and his company bag three geese and six ducks. Soon afterward, he gets some more. In fact, I don't believe there was a bird shot in Plymouth or its environs that Winslow doesn't report on. February is a veritable feast: not only a fat goose but a fat crane as well. And this should make historians pause: a crane? The crane is a migratory bird. There were no *fat* cranes in Massachusetts in February. This was almost certainly a turkey, but Winslow—the country's primary witness to its sole national feast—had no idea what one looked like.

He was not alone. Most Europeans were confused by the turkey and understood only that it was one of several big, foreign-looking birds—guinea hens, peacocks, even cranes—and the word for one was often used interchangeably for the others. (*Pavo,* Spanish for turkey, meant "peacock," and throughout the sixteenth century, in England, a turkey-cock and a guinea-cock clearly refer to the same thing, whatever it was.) The mystery is why English settled on the word "turkey" for an animal that came not from the East but from the very far West. The answer might be in why Italian did the same, not with a North American bird but with a North American grain. Corn, sold in Venice at about the same time, was called *granturco,* a "Turkish grain." (Inexplicably, it still is.) In the sixteenth century, fashionable foods weren't from the New World (it would take a hundred years be-

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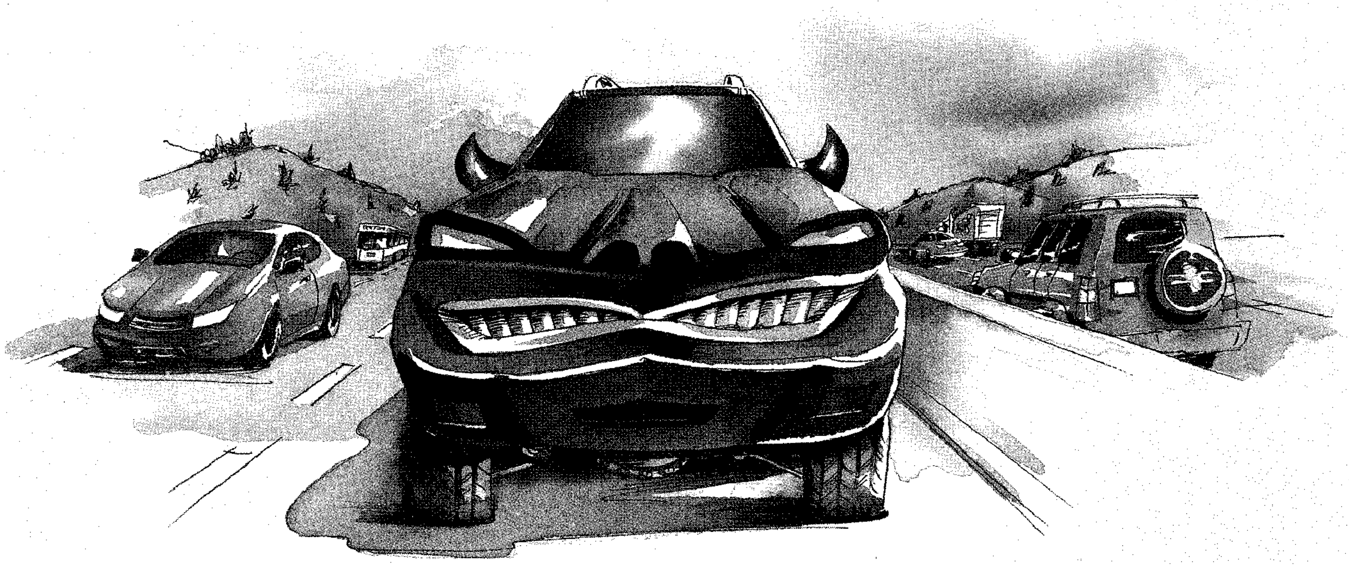

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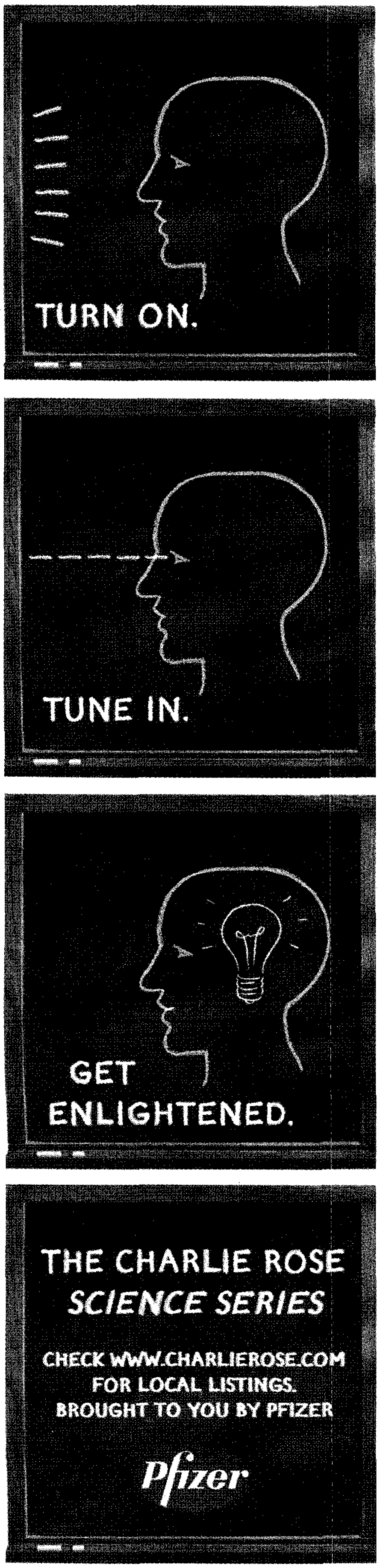

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fore Italians accepted that a tomato wasn't poisonous) but from the outreaches of the Ottoman Turkish Empire. To call something Turkish meant just that: a very faraway exotic thing.

In fact, the turkey had come from Mexico, conveyed to Europe no later than 1521, probably by Cortés, who had been introduced to it by the Aztecs, who had been domesticating it for centuries, probably by Joe Hutto's method of imprinting, followed by an accelerated version of Darwin's—a kind of unnatural selection. With each new hatching, you pick out the birds with the qualities you want to see more of (feather color, say, or meat quality, or temperament), and they become your breeders. The rest you eat. The process doesn't take very long. "There is enormous variation even in one flock of wild turkeys," Hutto told me. "The species is easy to manipulate." It was a kind of manipulation that English farmers excelled at.

The turkey arrived in England some time during the reign of Henry VIII, and by the mid-sixteenth century was being widely bred, especially in East Anglia, a barren, windswept, flat land, distinguished by its open sky and its miserable damp climate and its modest agriculture—beets, cabbage, and eels were regional delicacies. (The turkeys, being turkeys, thrived.) Within a generation, the bird had become a feature of the English diet. Shakespeare's plays have turkey jokes in them, and around the same time a ditty commemorated the century's radical changes:

> Turkey, Carps, Hoppes, Piccarel, and Beer,
> Came into England all in one year.

Many of today's so-called heritage breeds, like the Norfolk Black (or the various Whites and Bronzes), hark from this time, having been introduced to the United States from abroad. The turkey might be an all-American bird, but the one on your Thanksgiving table is almost certainly descended from Europe. What mystifies me is why people now buy these heritage birds, for as much as ten dollars a pound. Do they believe they're getting the real thing?

On my second day with Hutto, I accompanied him into the flatwoods in the late afternoon, hoping to come across some wild turkeys. We saw none. Turkeys walk fast, in unpredictable directions, roam for miles, and can be, therefore, very hard to come upon. Unless you're not looking for them, and then you see them all the time, of course, something that New England residents have recently observed. Sixty years ago, the bird was almost extinct: there were none in New York State; now there are a hundred thousand. No one is quite sure where they've come from, but the belief is that they crossed the state line from Pennsylvania, where zoologists have been reintroducing them since the forties. But, like Edward Winslow, many people still have trouble identifying the bird, which is nothing like the domesticated version: more reptile than fowl, with what looks like a hard shellacked black coat, a long unmodern neck, and an ugly pockmarked head. (A pediatrician of my acquaintance had to resort to the label of a famous bourbon to confirm the nature of the beast he'd discovered one day near his home.)

On my fourth day, Hutto proposed trying again after the sun came up. "I promise we'll see birds." The normal practice is to get out before dawn, in the vicinity of where you believe the turkeys may have roosted for the night (they sleep in trees), hoping that in the morning they'll land near where you're hiding. But Hutto intended to visit a meadow where they'd be feeding. "Let's get there after they arrive."

It was a sandy mile from his home, through vines and Spanish moss, longleaf pines and thick palmetto. We passed several ponds, including one with a floating island, where Hutto had found orchids and carnivorous plants. As we walked, he casually identified every piece of vegetation—"I know the name of everything that grows here"—not an unpleasant expertise to witness: I came away with a sense that there was an order in an environment that seemed otherwise crowded and overgrown and impenetrable. This was a peculiar corner of America, backed up into a steamy corner of the Gulf, largely untouched by developers. It was humid and hot, ponderously tropical ("A land that loves to be wet"), and I found myself feeling an abstract interconnectedness: the fossils, the memory of mammoths, estuaries everywhere, the history of hunters and gatherers, these elusive birds. In his book, Hutto describes the feeling, a hypnotic, heavy sense of har-

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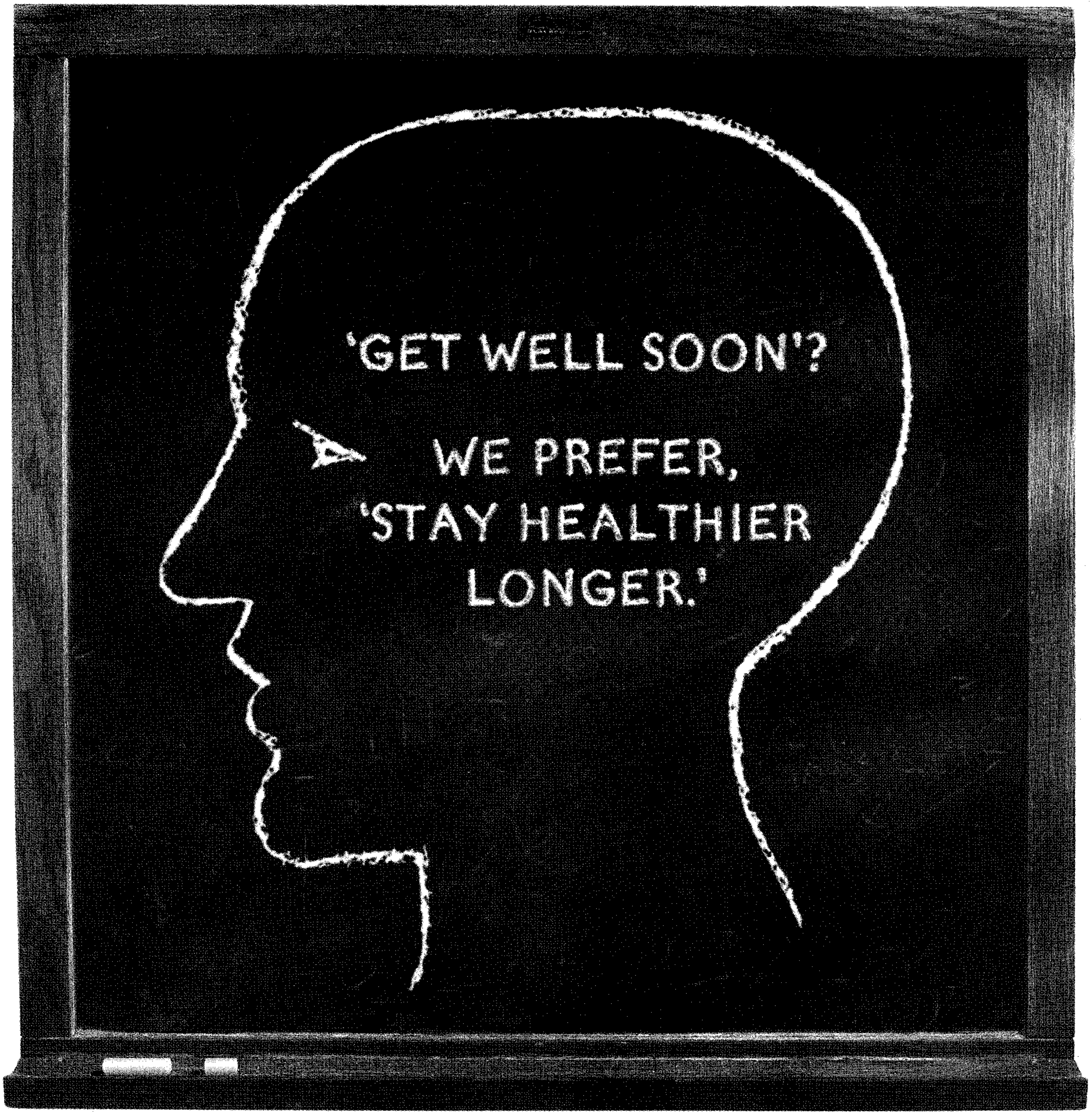
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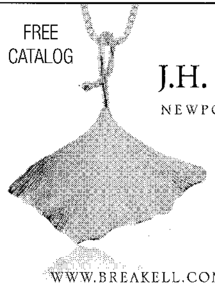

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mony, everything coming together—insects, vegetation, animals—a bird snuggling up against him on a damp, oppressive afternoon. (He falls asleep, dreaming of Joseph Campbell, and misses the approach of a hawk, which swoops down and picks up a two-week-old poult, and, startled that its mother has a mustache, drops it, but not before it dies—the first predator-death in the flock.)

We reached the large meadow and looked out. There were no turkeys.

I was accustomed to not seeing them. I'd tried to hunt them. I'm not a good hunter. I started late, at thirty, an anti-hunter suddenly converted by the philosophic dictates of what I would now describe as my own private pantheism, newly armed, and dangerously venturing out by myself into a Florida hammock, several hours south of Hutto's refuge. I found no turkeys. I returned the following year, around Thanksgiving, determined to get a bird for a holiday supper, and this time saw one: a speck on the horizon, running away at an impressive speed. Finally, my third year, I spotted two jakes walking down a trail toward where I was hiding. I didn't move. I didn't breathe. But I'd got such an adrenaline rush at their appearance that my heart went crazy. It was so amped—for a second I feared coronary arrest—that I could hear nothing but its pounding. Evidently, the jakes heard it, too, because they looked in my direction and were gone. ("A tiny flicker of motion fifty yards away gets their attention like a slap in the face," Hutto writes of his flock, astonished by a sensory ability that "borders on the supernatural" and regularly embarrassed by how dull and dumb he seems in comparison.)

The commonplace is that turkeys are ungainly, obese, slow, so stupid they raise their heads to drink when it rains and then drown. Hutto acknowledges the commonplace but insists that these qualities do not characterize wild birds, although you may see a lethargic stupor among the industrial domesticated ones: now, after four and a half centuries of unnatural selection, misshapen things, with pumped-up breasts and ineffectual legs, too fat and debilitated to reproduce naturally. (For years, the hens wore saddles and the toms were inserted in place; today, the hens are artificially inseminated.) These birds can still make for good eating, although the less industrial the better, and, in any case, no sensible person should ever seek out buttery beach balls or ones with pop-out red plastic timers. Even so, it was my knowledge of the turkey's historical disfigurement (starkly depicted by Karen Davis in "More Than a Meal" and on the Web site of United Poultry Concerns) that led me to take up hunting. If I eat meat, shouldn't I come face to face with killing an animal? And, if I'm going to eat an animal, shouldn't it be a healthy one that has lived in the wild?

In the spring, I attempted my first turkey call, a counter-intuitive piece of hunting logic: conventionally, predators surprise their prey—a pretty universal law. With a turkey, predators advertise their whereabouts and invite the prey to come on over. I went out early one morning, heavily camouflaged—shirt, trousers, hat, mask, gloves, not a millimetre of human flesh showing. Basically, I was dressed as a bush. I'd learned my lesson and wasn't about to blow my cover with a color that didn't look right in the woods. Turkeys respond powerfully to color, which Hutto discovered early on, by wearing a blue T-shirt during his first weeks with his poults. They concluded, therefore, that Hutto was blue. When he wore a different color, they went crazy, pecked at the shirt, and tried to remove it.

My turkey call was a piece of slate and a stick, which, when rubbed in circles, made a scrapy squeaky sound that was meant to imitate a hen yelping for a mate. I practiced a few times and listened: it was like fingernails on a chalkboard. No turkey was going to buy this. I entered the woods, not hopeful, and sat behind a big bush and considered the prospects: I was a big bush behind a big bush. I was trying to be invisible but noisy—that is, in a sexy, come-hither turkey kind of a way. I was not feeling confident. I was really not feeling sexy.

Scrape, scrape, scrape.

I waited. I repeated the sound. I waited. I repeated it again. Then I thought, This is ridiculous.

According to Hutto, only one sound drives turkeys away: the wrong call—a gobble, say, when they're expecting a yelp, or a yelp when they normally hear a *putt, putt.* (How could mine be anything but wrong?) Hutto's initial

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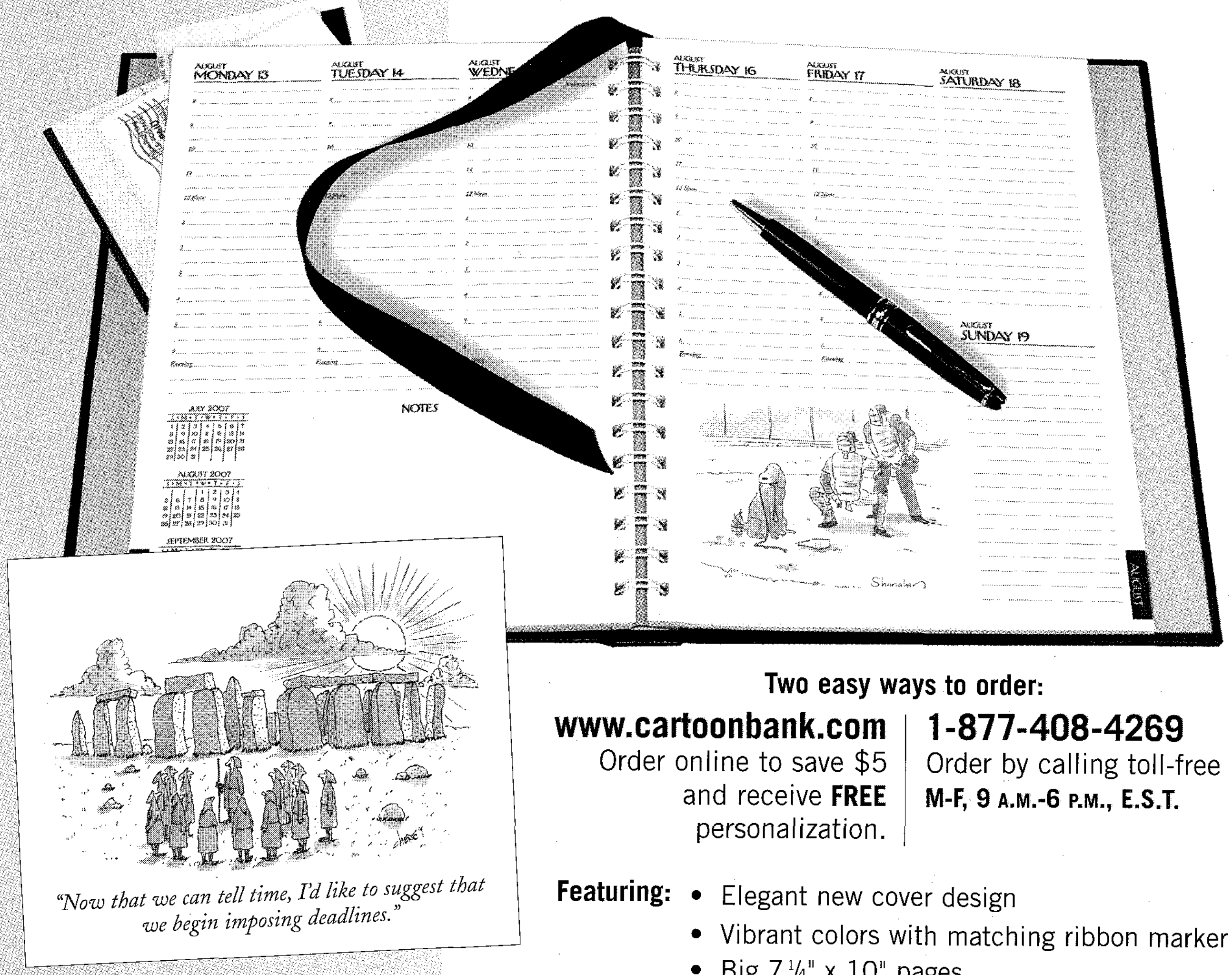

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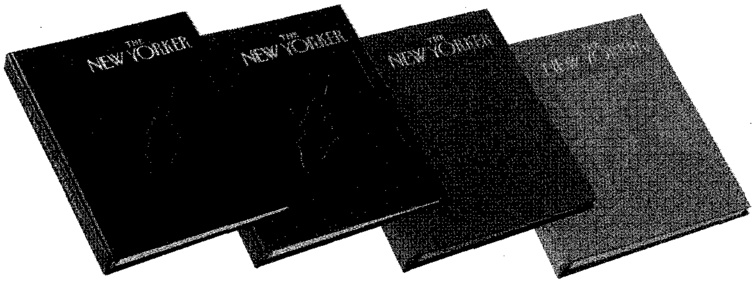

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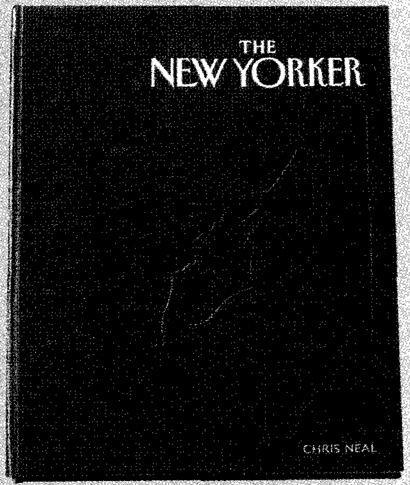

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education in the language of turkeys included different ways of expressing alarm, the sound that would tell his flock to recognize a hawk or look for a snake. (Predators were Hutto's greatest concern, and he built a cage to protect his poults at night, but, once, put them in it during the day, and joined his wife, now his ex-wife, for a rare Sunday lunch, dashing "to the house, trying to ignore the pleading lost calls behind me." When he returned, the birds were in a corner: a gray rat snake had slipped in and an enormous lump in its midsection was preventing it from getting out again—the second predator-death in the flock). Slowly, Hutto came to see that he could also tell the birds where to go, or what to look out for, or when to follow him home, until finally they reached a point where they had no "significant miscommunication." "I cannot distinguish all the subtle differences in the vocalizations," he writes, "but somehow the subtle meaning is conveyed to me." When the birds were surprised by a cottontail rabbit, for instance, they gathered around him for an explanation, and he told them to relax, it was just a bunny, which the birds found wholly unsatisfactory—what kind of answer is that?—and which they conveyed to him in no uncertain terms, making him feel "hopelessly obtuse." Later, a titmouse called out, Hutto responded, and engaged it in a conversation (being a "speaker of fluent titmouse"), and his turkeys got really irritated ("I see that all my companions seem to have little question marks over their heads"), and he had to stop.

I pressed on with my slate scratching, wondering how often I should be doing it (every five minutes? every five seconds?), recognizing the obvious—that I had no idea how a hen behaves—when I heard a deep slow trilling. A gobble. Lo and fucking behold. I peeked, ever so slowly, through the leaves of my bush and saw him. Whoa! A gobbler, puffed and tail spread, looking like the NBC logo. Wow! I'd called him in! I'd done it! What a gigantic freak of nature! But he was also too far away to shoot.

I repeated my scrape.

"*Gobble, gobble,*" he replied. I was ecstatic; I wanted to call someone on my cell phone.

I scraped again. Come on, big fella. Come to Mommy.

"*Gobble, gobble,*" he replied, charmingly. Even so, he wasn't moving.

Scrape, scrape. I was thinking how I'd prepare him (a very hot oven? slow-cooked? with foil?), never a good psychology. What's the saying? A bird in hand is worth two in the bush. But I was the bush, and had nothing in my hand, and was thinking about a dinner I hadn't caught.

"*Gobble, gobble.*"

He hadn't budged. He was talking to me, but I wasn't understanding what he was saying. (Probably "You sound like a hen but look like a bush, and I'm not coming an inch closer until you can show me that you're not a bush.")

Scrape, scrape.

"*Gobble, gobble.*" The exchange, my scraping, his gobbling, went on and on. The sun had just come up when we'd started; it was now blazing overhead. I was hot. Should I be playing hard to get? (I stopped; he walked away; I scraped; he came back.) Every now and then, I'd peek at him: still in four-color display—he wanted me—but he wasn't going to come and get me. I had to come out. How could I come out? I couldn't come out. But that's what I did: I stood up and stepped away from my bush. In an instant, he was gone: plumage tucked back under, puff gone, once again black and sleek, already a distant figure, sprinting, half a mile away, and not stopping anytime soon. "That bird," Hutto explained to me, "was an older gobbler. He'd lived through a spring. He'd learned doubt." And he'd understood himself much more than a younger jake: on the most elementary level, he knew he was a gobbler. Hutto then told me the story of Turkey Boy.

In Hutto's experiment, the aim was not to domesticate the birds but to raise them wild. They were always going to leave. When they were four months old, they showed their independence for the first time and decided not to return to the cage but flew up to the trees to spend the night. (Hutto called out to wish them good night; they answered.) But the birds, waiting for him in the morning, were ready to resume their daily routine together, foraging, eating berries and insects. (In his account, Hutto ceases to be a first-person observer. "We are fifteen now," he writes, summing up the numbers lost to predators and disease—"if I include myself.") Even so, the birds did not disobey him for another ten days—in itself an extraordinary achievement—when, disregarding his instructions, they walked too close to a house with dogs. ("I am very upset, actually in pain.")

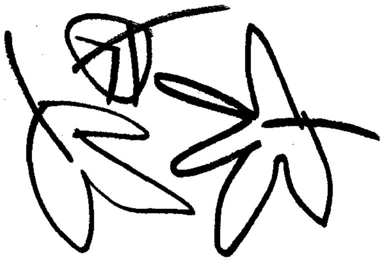
They were now young adults, starting to separate according to gender, in anticipation of the mating season—which is also the hunting season. "That's when I worry," Hutto told me. "The jakes understand nothing. Their bodies are crazy with hormones. They're getting beaten up by older birds and don't know why, and they're so ready to be loved they believe everything." He feared that, answering to the calls of hunters, the jakes would be shot. Even today, Hutto goes out into the woods before the season starts and calls the jakes to him, leaping out at the last second and screaming, scaring the bejeebers out of the creatures. "I'm teaching them caution."

After the first year, all the turkeys had left, except one.

According to Hutto, Turkey Boy had become his best friend. "We were inseparable. I took advantage of every minute I could to be with him, because I knew he'd be dead soon." They had meals together, because Turkey Boy didn't recognize that Hutto was different, so whatever Hutto ate the turkey believed he was entitled to eat as well: Hutto's coffee, his turkey sandwich, his glass of wine. ("There would be a small deposit of gray sand in the bottom from Turkey Boy's gritty mouth.") Every day, they went into the woods, and Hutto found a log and rolled it over—so that Turkey Boy could eat the insects—and then he'd sit and wait for the bird to tell him things. "He'd hear stuff I couldn't hear. That there were turkeys coming in our direction, about a mile away. I'd be quiet and wait for them to appear. Or he'd hear a fox running down a creek and tell me to listen out for it. He could spot snakes, especially rattlers. It was as though he had X-ray vision."

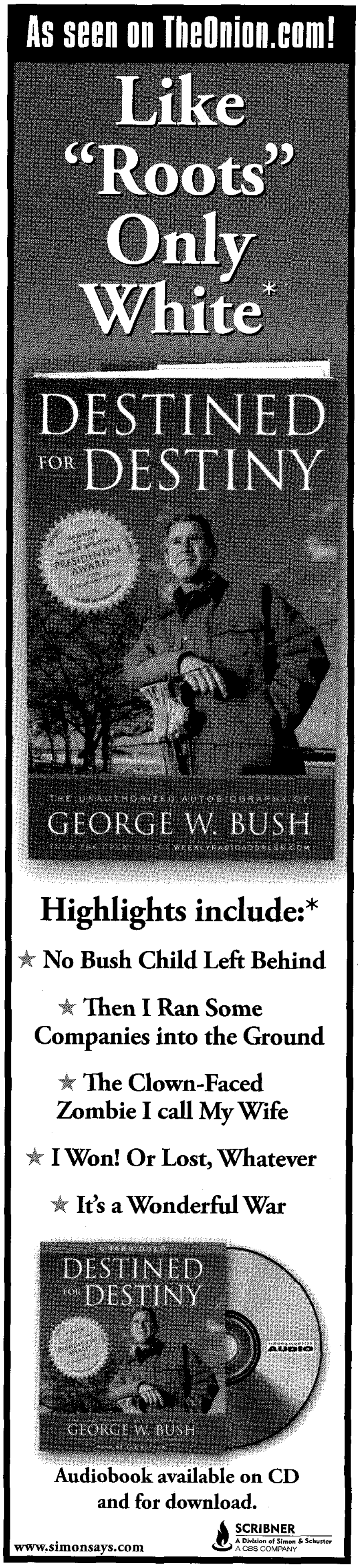
But what was the relationship? In the turkey's eyes, was Hutto a man or a bird?

One day, in the early spring, Hutto was on his knees, struggling to pull out a root. He turned and noticed Turkey Boy: his head was engorged, and his plumage was swelling. "My behavior must have provoked him. I was on his level, on the ground, thrashing around." Hutto reached out his hand to comfort the bird, but it pecked him, drawing blood. Hutto got up to go inside, but the bird got to the door first and blocked his way. He eventually got inside. "I assumed the incident would pass." When he stepped out four hours later, the bird flew at his head. Hutto then understood: he was being seen as a rival. He thought he should simply surrender and be submissive—the attitude that male turkeys assume to concede their spot in a pecking order—and threw himself on the ground. The bird attacked his head, which Hutto tried to cover with his hands, shredding the skin. It didn't stop—"Turkey Boy's wrath was bottomless"—and Hutto got to his feet and sprinted for the door. The bird flew at him, stabbing him from behind, embedding his spurs into the muscles on either side of Hutto's spine. The next day, the bird was lying in wait and ambushed him, spurs aimed at his eye. Hutto had a problem. He broke off a heavy limb from a longleaf pine, squared off in front of the bird, and swung it like a baseball bat. He missed, lost his footing, and fell. The bird beat him up. Hutto got to his feet and swung again, hitting the bird squarely on the head. The bird looked at Hutto, turned, and ran. ("I was sick. My heart was broken.") It returned the next day, ready to resume the fight.



On the last morning of my visit, Hutto suggested we drive out to the sea. "There are always turkeys there. I'm sure we'll see some."

We drove to the town of Panacea, and followed dirt roads until there was nowhere else to go, a characteristically impenetrable forest, thick hammock on both sides of us that suddenly opened out onto a vast, undisturbed estuary, shaped like so many fingers poking into the continent, two big hands in rubbery shiny gloves. We had a panoramic view. The water seemed to be boiling—with shrimp and red fish, wood storks and egrets, a thoroughfare of wildlife, unspoiled. But there were no turkeys. ♦



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HOMER IN INDIA

The oral epics of Rajasthan.

BY WILLIAM DALRYMPLE

Sixteen years ago, I moved to the Indian state of Rajasthan to begin work on a book. Bruce Chatwin was then my hero, and his widow, Elizabeth, had told me about a remote fortress in the desert where Bruce had written his great study of restlessness, "The Songlines." Rohet Garh was built in the early seventeenth century by a Rajput chieftain who had been given the land by the local maharaja as a reward for bravery on the battlefield. It was surrounded by a high, battlemented wall that faced out over a lake. In the morning, light would stream into the bedroom through cusped arches, and reflections from the lake would ripple across the ceiling beams. There were egrets nesting on an island in the lake, and peacocks in the trees at its side.

Though Rohet Garh was relatively close to the capital, New Delhi—only nine hours' drive to the west—it existed in an utterly different world, almost in a different century. In Delhi, the small Indian middle class among whom I lived inhabited a fragile aspirational bubble. On every side, new suburbs were springing up, on land that only a few years ago was billowing winter wheat. As you drove down the Jaipur Highway, however, cars and trucks gave way to camel and bullock carts, denim to dusty cotton dhotis. The farther you went, the drier it got, so that the color began to drain away from the landscape but for the occasional flash of a red sari: a woman winding her way to the village well.

Rohet Garh was the home of a *thakur*—a Rajasthani gentleman landowner. Secluded in his oasis in the Thar Desert, he had preserved the quiet, ordered way of life he had inherited from his forebears, a way of life not wholly dissimilar to that enjoyed by those reclusive tsarist landlords immortalized by Chekhov and Turgenev. To enter the gates of Rohet Garh was to walk into a world familiar from "A Month in the Country" or "Sketches from a Hunter's Album." Lapdogs careered over croquet lawns. Long-widowed grandmothers and great-aunts held court from far-flung dowager wings. Unmarried daughters would blush into their silks while their father loudly discussed their suitors. Everyone dressed for dinner.

Mohan Bhopa, with his wife and his son, performing in front of the sacred phad. Photograph by Raghu Rai.

MAGNUM

Only the fortnightly expedition into "town" would break the daily routine. The entire family, along with lapdogs, Labradors, and a full complement of servants, would pile into the family jeep. Then they would set off, over the scrubland, to the house in Jodhpur. There the great-aunts would be wheeled to their rival temples, the unmarried daughters and visiting nieces would buy new saris, and the boys would stock up on cartridges for their sand-grouse and partridge shoots. Thakur Sahib would visit his bank manager, and his club. I would remain in the old fort, and I used to relish the solitude. From my desk, the desert scrub was flat and dry, and its very harshness concentrated the mind. In the following weeks, the pages of the new manuscript began to pile up.

Rajasthan was a profoundly conservative state, even by the standards of India, one of the most conservative countries in the world. During the Raj, around two-fifths of India's vast landmass remained under the nominal control of its indigenous princely rulers, and much of this territory lay in Rajasthan, where semi-feudal rule had effectively continued up to 1971, when Indira Gandhi finally abolished the maharajas.

The absence of any overt forms of colonial British intrusion meant that many aspects of medieval Indian society had remained intact. On the one hand, this meant that the grip of the old landlords—like Thakur Sahib—was stronger here than elsewhere; cases of ritual widow-burning, or sati, were not unknown. On the other hand, castes of nomadic musicians, miniaturists and muralists, jugglers and acrobats, bards and mimes were still practicing their skills. Every prominent landholding family in the Rajput caste, I discovered, inherited a family of oral genealogists, musicians, and praise singers, who celebrated the family's lineage and deeds. It was considered a disgrace if these minstrels were forced by neglect to formally "divorce" their patrons. Then they would break the strings of their instruments and bury them in front of their patron's house, cutting the family off from the accumulated centuries of ancestral songs, stories, and traditions. It was the oral equivalent of a library or a family archive being burned to cinders.

While I was staying at Rohet, I heard about what seemed to be the most remarkable survival of all: the existence of several orally transmitted epic poems. Unlike the ancient epics of Europe—the Iliad, the Odyssey, Beowulf, and the Nibelungenlied (the basis of Wagner's "Ring Cycle")—which were now the province only of academics and literature classes, the epics of Rajasthan were still very much alive. They were preserved by a caste of wandering *bhopas*—shamans and bards—who travelled from village to village, staging performances.

"The *bhopa* is a normal villager until the god Pabuji comes to him," one of the aunts explained. "Then he has great power. People bring him the possessed, and Pabuji cures them."

"How?" I asked.

"Sometimes the *bhopa* just says a mantra over them. He tries to make the spirit speak—to reveal who he is. But," she added ominously, "sometimes he has to beat the possessed person with his rods, or cut him and draw blood."

One afternoon, during a long walk through the desert, I met a *bhopa*. He was very old and dressed in a tatty white kurta-dhoti. He had a cataract in his left eye, and he parted his great fan of beard outward at the center of his chin. This man worked as a village exorcist, but I had heard that there were still many other *bhopas*, out in the wild places of the desert, whose job it was to recite the great epics, some of them many thousands of stanzas long. They were the men I wanted to meet.

In the summer of 1933, a young Harvard classicist named Milman Parry caught a ship to Yugoslavia. Parry set off on his travels intending to prove in the field a brilliant theory he had dreamed up when he was a student in Paris: that Homer's works, the foundation upon which all subsequent European literature rested, must have originally been oral poems, and that they contained certain recurring formulas that he thought were a product of traditions of oral transmission. He believed that to study Homer properly you had first to understand how oral poetry worked, and that Yugoslavia was the place in Europe where such traditions had best survived.

On and off for the next two years, Parry toured the cafés of the Balkans. One of his assistants, Albert Lord, described the approach they adopted:

> The best method of finding singers was to visit a Turkish coffee house, and make enquiries there. This is the center for the peasant on the market day, and the scene of entertainment during the evening of the month of Ramazan. We found such a place on a side street, dropped in, and ordered coffee. Lying on a bench not far from us was a Turk smoking a cigarette in an antique silver "cigarluk" (cigarette holder). . . . He knew of singers. The best, he said, was a certain Avdo Mededovic, a peasant farmer who lived an hour away. How old is he? Sixty, sixty-five.

The New York Times

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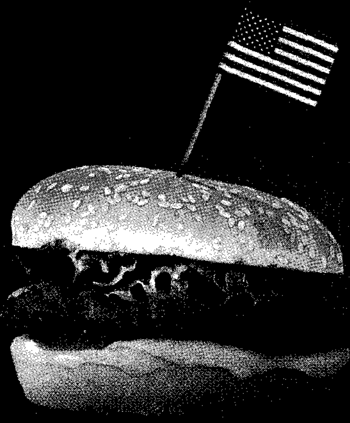

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> Does he know how to read or write? *Ne zna, brate*! (No, brother!) . . .
>
> Finally Avdo came, and he sang for us old Salih's favorite of the taking of Bagdad in the days of Sultan Selim. We listened with increasing interest to this short homely farmer, whose throat was disfigured by a large goiter. He sat cross-legged on a bench, sawing the *gusle*, swaying in rhythm with the music. . . .
>
> The next few days were a revelation. Avdo's songs were longer and finer than any we had heard before. He could prolong one for days, and some of them reached fifteen or sixteen thousand lines.

What Parry found in the months that followed exceeded all his hopes. By the time he returned to America, in September, 1935, he had collected no fewer than twelve thousand five hundred epics and other songs—tales of the great Serbian defeat by the Ottomans at Kosovo, of the deeds of long-dead Balkan heroes—and had accumulated a ton of aluminum recording disks.

Parry, once described as "the Darwin of oral literature," died shortly afterward, in a shooting accident, at the age of thirty-three; but his work revolutionized understanding of the Greek classics. Yet even while Parry was at work the oral tradition was beginning to die out in the cities and the more developed parts of Yugoslavia. Since then, it has all but disappeared as a living institution.

In India, however, an even more elaborate tradition had managed to survive, relatively intact. An anthropologist friend had told me how he once met a travelling storyteller in a village in southern India. The bard knew the Mahabharata—India's equivalent of the Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Bible, all rolled into one. The epic is the story of the rivalry of two sets of princely cousins whose enmity culminates in an Armageddon-like war on the battlefield of Kurukshetra; at its heart lies the Bhagavad Gita, for many Hinduism's most profound and holy text, a dialogue, on the eve of battle, between the god Krishna and one of the princely heroes about duty, illusion, and reality.

With its hundred thousand *slokas* (stanzas), the Mahabharata was more than six times the length of the Bible. My friend had asked the bard how he could possibly remember it. The minstrel replied that each stanza was written on a pebble in his mind. He simply had to recall the order of the pebbles and "read" from one after another.

India's population may not be particularly literate—the literacy rate is sixty per cent—but it remains surprisingly erudite culturally, as Wendy Doniger, an American Sanskrit scholar, has pointed out. Anthony Lane noted in this magazine in 2001, in the aftermath of the attacks on the United States, that the people of New York again and again compared what had happened to them to films: "It was like 'Independence Day' "; "It was like 'Die Hard' "; "No, 'Die Hard 2.' " In contrast, when the tsunami struck at the end of 2004, Indians were able to reach for a more sustaining narrative than disaster movies: the catastrophic calamities and floods that fill the Mahabharata and the Hindu tradition in general. As Doniger puts it, "The myths pick up the pieces where philosophy throws up its hands. The great myths may help survivors to think through this unthinkable catastrophe, to make a kind of sense by analogy."

While the Mahabharata is today the most famous of the Indian epics, it was originally only one of a large number. During the Mogul period, for example, one of the most popular was the Muslim epic Dastan-i Amir Hamza, or the Story of Hamza. The brave and chivalrous Hamza, the paternal uncle of the Prophet, journeys from Iraq to Sri Lanka, via Mecca, Tangiers, and Byzantium, on the way falling in love with various beautiful Persian and Greek princesses, and all the while avoiding the traps laid for him by his terrible foe, the dastardly magician Zumurrud Shah.

Over the centuries, the factual underpinning of the story was covered in layers of fantastic subplots and a cast of dragons, giants, and sorcerers—in one of its most popular forms, the tale encompassed three hundred and sixty stories. Today, however, while children in Persia, Pakistan, and parts of India may be acquainted with some episodes, the Story of Hamza as a whole no longer really exists as an oral epic. There are fears that the Mahabharata and other Hindu epics could share that fate in the twenty-first century, surviving in written or recorded forms only.

Given all this, it seemed extraordinary to find in modern Rajasthan performers who were still the guardians of an entire self-contained oral culture. Apart from anything else, I longed to know how the *bhopas*, who were always simple villagers—ploughmen, cowherds, and so on—and often illiterate, could remember such colossal quantities of verse. Recently, having moved back to Delhi after an absence of ten years, I decided to go in search of the *bhopas* who had preserved this ancient tradition. It would, I felt, be a little like meeting Homer in the flesh.

There were several full-fledged Rajasthani epic poems that the *bhopas* performed, but two were especially popular. One told the tale of the deeds, feuds, life, death, and avenging of Pabuji, a semi-divine warrior and incarnate god who died protecting a goddess's cattle against demonic rustlers. The other—four times its size, much more ambitious, and with similarities to both the Iliad and "Once Upon a Time in the West"—was the tale of a humble cattle herder named Sawai Bhoj, of the Bagravat clan; he eloped with an incarnate goddess, who had taken the form of a beautiful young wife of an elderly Rajput raja, and so sparked a monumental caste war. This ultimately led to the bloody death of Sawai Bhoj and twenty-two of his twenty-three brothers—deaths that were avenged, Sicilian style, by Sawai Bhoj's son, Dev Narayan, the legend's hero. Both epics—like the Dastan-i Amir Hamza and the Mahabharata—seemed to be based on a kernel of historical truth and revolved around figures who may once have lived, before the mythological process began to elaborate their stories and turn them into gods. Significantly, the divinity of both figures is not usually accepted by the Hindu priestly caste, the Brahmins, and the gods' priests and *bhopas* are drawn from among villagers of the lower castes.

According to the Rohet aunts, the Dev Narayan epic—which, recited in full, could take almost a month of eight-hour, nightlong performances—had been written down only some thirty years ago. The person who did this was a distant neighbor and friend of the aunts, an elderly but feisty-sounding Rajasthani rani (or princess) named Laxmi Kumari Chundawat. I discovered that Laxmi Chundawat was still living in Jaipur, and we arranged to meet there, in her family's town house.

I found the old lady sitting on a cane chair on the veranda of an inner courtyard. She was a poised and intelligent octogenarian, whose fine bones were obscured by thick librarian glasses, which perched heavily on her nose and gave her expression a rather owlish gleam. She told me that she had been born in the family palace at Deogarh, from which her father had ruled a huge semi-desert principality. The purdah system—the seclusion of women—still operated then as much for Hindu aristocratic women as for Muslim ones, but in 1957 the Rani had shocked her family by emerging from the *zanana* and standing for the Rajasthan Assembly.

"The area where the story of Dev Narayan was set was in my father's principality and in my own constituency," she said. It was during her time in the assembly that she became interested in the epic, but she also became increasingly fearful that it was under threat from television and the cinema. "When I realized that the epic about him was beginning to die out," she added, "I determined to do something about it."

In the early nineteen-seventies, the Rani began inquiring if any of the local *bhopas* still knew the entire saga by heart. Many knew the outlines, she discovered, and some knew parts in detail, but none seemed to know the entire story. Eventually, however, she was directed to a village near Jaipur where an old gray-bearded *bhopa* named Lakshminarayan lived. She persuaded him to come to her house, along with another *bhopa* ("to encourage him"), while she went to Delhi and bought a tape recorder.

"He came to stay with me for ten or twelve weeks," she said. "He used to sing and I used to write. We did nothing else except this, six or seven hours at a time. It is astonishing that any individual could remember such a long work. In my printed edition, it takes six hundred and twenty-six pages.

"The *bhopa* told me he was only four years old when his father began to teach him to learn it by heart," the Rani continued. "Every day, he had to learn ten or twenty lines by rote. His father gave him buffalo milk so that his memory would improve.

"Anyway," she added, "I've arranged a performance of the Pabuji epic for you tonight. Mohan Bhopa is coming here at seven. So you can ask him all about it then."

That night, when I returned to Rani Chundawat's mansion, the courtyard had been transformed. Lamps had been hung around the arches, amid tangling bougainvillea. Thin white mattresses had been laid out on the ground, along with round silk bolsters to lean on, and at the end of the cloister, stretched between two poles, a long painted hanging had been unfurled.

It was like a fresco transferred to textile: a vibrant, apparently chaotic seventeen-foot-long panorama of medieval India—women, horses, peacocks, carts, archers, battles, washermen and fishermen, kings and queens, huge gray elephants and herds of white cows, many-armed demons and blue-skinned gods,

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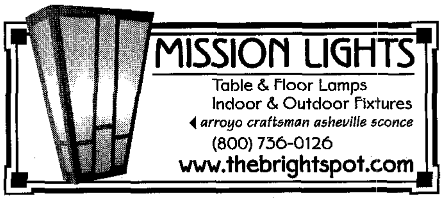
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all arranged around the central outsized figures of Pabuji, his magnificent black mare, and his four brothers-in-arms. This, I knew, must be the *phad.*

"The *bhopas* use the *phad* as part of their performance," the Rani had explained. "It's a very ancient tradition. If you look at the paintings from the caves in Central Asia, such as those at Dunhuang, you'll see images of itinerant monks and storytellers with the scrolls they used then. The *phads* are the last survival of that tradition. The *bhopas* like to say that the *phad* of Dev Narayan is so full of bravery that when you tell the tale the grass gets burned around it."

The Rani told me that once the *phad* was complete and the eyes of the hero were painted in, neither the artist nor the *bhopa* regarded it as a piece of art. Instead, it became a mobile temple: as Pabuji's devotees were semi-nomadic herders, his temple—the *phad*—visited the worshippers rather than the other way around. It was believed that the spirit of the god was now in residence, and that henceforth the *phad* was a ford linking one world with the next, a crossing place from the realm of the human to the realm of the divine. The *bhopas* treated the *phad* with the greatest reverence, making daily offerings to it, and passing it on to their child once they became too old to perform. If it got ripped or faded, they would take it to the holy lake at Pushkar and decommission it, or, as they put it, *thanda karna*—make it cool, remove the power of the deity—before consigning it to the holy waters, rather like Excalibur being returned to the lake, in the legend of King Arthur.

At first, I didn't notice the *bhopa* and his family, squatting in the shadows. Mohan Bhopa was a tall, dark-skinned man of about sixty, with a bristling gray handlebar mustache. He wore a long red robe and a tightly tied red turban. He was barefoot and there were bells attached to his ankles. Beside Mohan was his wife, Patasi, her face shrouded in a red peaked veil. As Mohan supervised, she swept the ground around the *phad* and sprinkled it with water. Then she prepared the wick of an oil lamp and both of them raised their palms in reverence to the deity of the scroll.

Before long, Laxmi Chundawat arrived with her guests, and she gave the signal for Mohan to begin. He picked up his fiddle—an instrument called a *ravanhattha*—as his wife held up the lamp to illuminate the *phad.* Mohan played an instrumental overture, then, accompanied by his son on the *dholak* (a drum), he began to sing in a voice full of solemnity and sadness. Every so often, as Patasi held up the lamp, he would stop, point with his bow to an illustration on the *phad,* and then recite a line of explanatory verse, all the while plucking at the string with his thumb.

At the end of each *sloka,* Patasi would step forward, fully veiled, and sing the next stanza, before handing the song back to her husband. As the story unfolded, and the husband and wife passed the *slokas* back and forth, the tempo increased, and Mohan began to whirl and dance, jiggling his hips and stamping his feet so as to ring the bells, and shouting out, "Aa-ha! Hai! Wa-hai!"

During the performance, I asked another guest, who understood Mewari, one of the five major dialects of Rajasthan, if he could check Mohan Bhopa's rendition against a transcription by John D. Smith, of Cambridge University, of a version performed in a different part of Rajasthan in the nineteen-seventies. Give or take a couple of turns of phrase, the two versions were identical, he said. And there was nothing homespun about Mohan Bhopa's language, he added. It was delivered in a fine and courtly diction.

In Yugoslavia, Milman Parry had been excited by the way that his poets recomposed and improvised their tales as they recited them: each performance was unique. Yet, from what I could gather of the Rajasthani epics, they were regarded as sacred works, their form relatively fixed. *Bhopas* such as Mohan were barely more free to tamper with the compositions than, say, a Catholic priest was free to alter the words of consecration at the holiest moment of the Mass. In this sense, they were like Homer's epics, for both the Iliad and the Odyssey invoke the gods at the beginning.

Mohan sang one of the most famous episodes: the Story of the She-Camels. This follows the wedding of Pabuji's favorite niece, Kelam. The wedding guests give fabulous gifts: gold bangles, pearls, and "a fine dress of best Deccany cloth to wear," carriages and gold pendants for

Kelam's horses, herds of white cows and "swaying elephants." Then comes Pabuji's turn. Instead of producing a gift, he makes a vow. "I shall plunder the reddish-brown she-camels," he says, from Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. The wedding guests all laugh, because no one in Rajasthan has ever seen a camel, and they are not quite sure whether such a beast exists. Kelam's husband is asked, "What kind of wedding gift did Pabuji give you?," and he replies:

> Pabuji's wedding-gift wanders and grazes in Lanka. Who knows whether it is like a hill, who knows whether it is like a mountain, who knows whether it has five heads or ten feet? But he has given me a kind of animal that I have never seen.

After Mohan had sung for a couple of hours, there was a break while the Rani's guests headed off for dinner. I asked Mohan whom he normally performed for—the local landowners, perhaps? No, he said, it was usually cowherds and his fellow-villagers. Their motives, as he described them, were less to hear the poetry than to use him as a sort of supernatural veterinary service.

"People call me in whenever their animals fall sick," he said. "Camels, sheep, buffalo, cows—any of these. Pabuji is very powerful at curing sickness in beasts. He is also good at curing any child who is possessed by a djinn."

"So does Pabuji enter you while you perform?"

"How can I do it unless the spirit comes?" Mohan said. "You are educated. I am not, but I never forget the words, thanks to Pabuji. As long as I invoke him at the beginning, all will be well. Wherever we perform, the demons run away. No ghosts, no spirits can withstand the power of this story."

Mohan smiled, and twirled the ends of his mustache. "The *phad* is the temple. Even rolled up, it keeps evil influences at bay," he said. "The deity resides there, asleep until I wake him with the dance. Sometimes, when we recite the epic, toward dawn the lamp glows white. It happens when we reach the crux of the story—when Pabuji gives water to the stolen cattle that he has saved. Then I can glimpse the future. But it's very rare and happens only when we do a complete performance."

He added, "The lampblack from the lamp that glows in this way is very powerful. It can be used to heal anything."

It was the old primeval link between storytellers and magic, the shaman and the teller of tales, still intact in twenty-first-century Rajasthan. "So you are as much a healer, a curer of the sick, as a storyteller?" I asked.

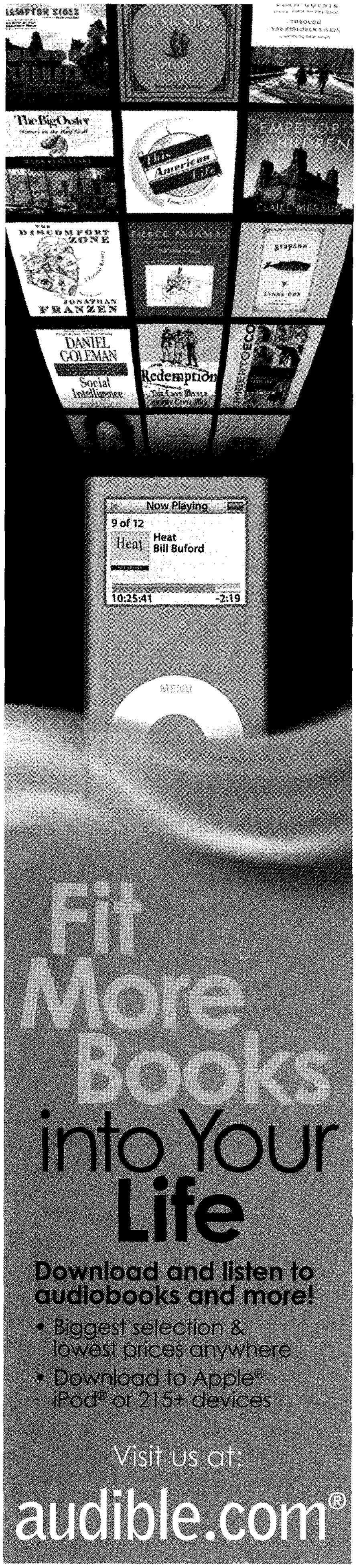
"Of course," Mohan said. "Thanks to Pabuji. It is he who cures. Not me."

In the course of our conversation, Mohan mentioned that the great fair of Dev Narayan was currently taking place in the hero's remote home village of Sawai Bhoj, a hundred and fifty miles away in the arid badlands of the Bhilwara district. Tomorrow was the last day. The roads were not good and it was at least a seven-hour drive, he said, but if I left early I should be able to get there in time to see the biggest annual gathering of *bhopas* in all Rajasthan.

Crossing the scrub in a taxi early the next morning, I looked out on a far drier landscape than anything I had yet come across: a white, sun-blasted planisphere of desert plains and camel-thorn. Occasionally, the emptiness was broken by cowherds in yellow turbans patiently leading their beasts through the dust, or a slow convoy of nomads in camel carts, followed by a phalanx of barking dogs.

On the potholed single-track road to Sawai Bhoj, the driver and I began to meet other pilgrims. Some were on foot: lonely figures trudging through the white midnight of the desert. Other villagers rode together in tractors, pulling trailers full of women in deep-blue saris. Occasionally, we would pass through a village where we would see pilgrims taking their rest in the shade of the wells beside the temples. As we drove, the settlements grew poorer; the camel-thorn closed in.

In this landscape, and in the ultra-conservative society which clings to it, caste can still define not only what you wear but where you live, what trade you follow, whom you marry, even the color you paint your house. Beneath India's apparent chaos lies a fairly rigid network of thousands of minutely graduated castes and subcastes. Everyone knows his place, and what is expected of him. This is one reason that Rajasthan has proved relatively unchanging and has succeeded in preserving so many of its ancient rituals and arts intact: if your father was a *bhopa*, then you will probably be one, too. More-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over, individual gods have become associated with individual castes. Thus Dev Narayan was believed to be from the Gujar herding caste, and had become the patron deity of that community, while his epic was their myth of religious identity, their way of understanding who they were. The festival was the great annual gathering of the caste, and every Gujar village in India sent representatives, along with their cattle.

Sawai Bhoj, when we finally got there, was a scrappy, dusty place; nothing about the village itself prepared one for the fair. The temple to Dev Narayan, in the fields outside the village, had become the center of a vast encampment. As far as the eye could see, there were cows and humped Brahmin bulls and their herders: thin, wiry men in white homespun cloth, squatting in circles, sipping chai or smoking bidis, their white bulls beside them chewing their cud. Although the fair took place around the temple, and was opened by an elaborate ceremony invoking the god, it quickly became clear that the festival—like many of those in medieval Europe—was as much about cattle trading as it was about religion.

During the day, the pilgrims would trade their livestock and swap gossip. Then, deals done, they would give thanks to Dev Narayan, and ten thousand of them would settle down after sunset to hear the *bhopas* sing the epic of their god, each night taking the story slowly forward.

When I had asked Rani Laxmi Chundawat why she thought that the epics were beginning to die, she had been very clear. "When the stories used to be told, everyone had a horse and some cattle," she said. "Now, when a *bhopa* tells stories about the beauty of a horse, it doesn't make the same connection with the audience." By the same logic, it was easy to see why the tradition had survived here: the pastoral context of the story—of cows and horses and heroic cattle herders—was still intact.

Moreover, the Gujars are very often illiterate, and illiteracy seems an essential condition for preserving the performance of an oral epic. It was the ability of the bard to read, rather than changes in the tastes of his audience, that sounded the death knell for the oral tradition. Just as the blind can develop a heightened sense of hearing, smell, and touch to compensate for their loss of vision, so it seems that the illiterate have a capacity to remember in a way that the literate simply do not.

This was certainly the conclusion of the Indian folklorist Komal Kothari. In the nineteen-fifties, Kothari came up with the idea of sending one of his principal sources, a singer from the Langa caste named Lakha, to adult-education classes. The idea was that he would learn to read and write, thus making it easier to collect the many songs he had preserved. Soon Kothari noticed that Lakha needed to consult his diary before he began to sing. Yet the rest of the Langa singers were able to remember hundreds of songs—an ability that Lakha had somehow begun to lose as he slowly learned to write.

Walking along the line of stalls selling balloons and cassettes and spicy samosas, I got into conversation with Shiv Narayan Gujar. He had come some five hundred miles from his village, in eastern Madhya Pradesh, deep in central India. "All of us Gujars believe we are descendants of Sawai Bhoj and his twenty-three brothers," he said. "So this is like a family reunion. Every Gujar must make this pilgrimage once. This is our tradition."

His friend Pratab Singh Gujar, standing to one side, nodded. "A lot of miracles took place in our village thanks to Dev Narayan," he said. "This year we prayed to him that it would rain, and it did. We earned good money, so I have come to give a tithe of what I made."

"As Gujars, we always pray first to Dev Narayan," Shiv Narayan said. "All gods are one, but Dev Narayan is our exclusive god. He answers all our wishes—from the richest to the poorest."

As we were speaking, there was a sound of loud rhythmic drumming. A large group of Gujar pilgrims from a village in Jodhpur district, a hundred miles away, were arriving on foot, carrying the huge colorful heraldic flag of their village—it was as if the pageantry of the Palio, in Siena, had been lifted to the dusty villages of rural Rajasthan. As the drums beat, the priests took the flag and placed it with hundreds of others on the balcony above the temple veranda.

"By evening, you'll see the flags of all the different Gujar communities up there," Shiv Narayan said. "They must all be here by tonight. Yesterday, fifty more brought their flags. We have about a thousand villages in all."

I asked if they had been watching the *phad* performances.

"Of course," Pratab said. "Television we can watch any day. But this is once in a lifetime."

Shiv Narayan said that as a child he was thrilled when the *bhopa* came to his village all the way from Rajasthan. "It was always a big event," he said. "We would play drums to attract all the other Gujar villages."

"Because the *phad* is dedicated to our god, we were never allowed to get up in the middle," Pratab said. "Until the *Bhopa-ji* gets tired and stops for chai, we had to sit quiet and listen—even until dawn.

"But now that we have TV our children don't like to listen so much," Pratab added. "They prefer the CD with the main points of the story. It takes only four hours."

It took some time to locate the *bhopa* who was giving the performance. It was midafternoon, but Bhero Ram Gujar Bhopa, exhausted from his labors the night before, had only just risen from his bed. I found him sitting cross-legged on a bench in a tea stall, yawning broadly and sipping chai from a small white cup. He was a tall, handsome, strongly built man in his late thirties, with a raffish jewel flashing in each earlobe.

"It's like a night shift," he explained. "I begin the recitation at nine-fifteen and continue through until dawn."

"You must be exhausted," I said.

"God gives you the power," he replied. "When I recite, I feel that I am Dev Narayan. He gives me the power to concentrate. Only those who are fully possessed can worship the deity with full vigor. If you don't feel that energy and don't feel the god within you, you get tired very quickly."

I asked whether his father was also a *bhopa*.

"Of course," he said. "And not just my father but my grandfather and his grandfather, too. We have six hundred years of tradition of reading the *phad* in my family. When I was ten, I started playing the *dholak*. My father used to teach me one story a day, then he would correct me as I recited it back. By the time I was sixteen, I knew most of the epic—and now my children are learning."

"But do you know the whole epic?" I asked.

"No," he replied. "I don't think anyone does anymore—certainly not all the stories within the stories. I only know seven nights' worth—and I don't know any *bhopa* who knows more. It's like the Mahabharata. No one knows the whole of that, either."

"So do you think the *phad* can survive?"

"Not the full version," he said. "That has gone already. People are still interested, but they want to enjoy other things, too. There is competition from films and TV, and these ugly DVDs—these are ruining the art."

I asked Bhero Ram what he could possibly do to hold out against such competition. He shrugged.

"I am always trying to improve my singing," he said. "And I try to put in a joke when people are getting sleepy. Nothing Bollywoodish or vulgar, just enough to grab attention in between scenes. It's not easy for people to concentrate for eight hours—though in the villages, where there are no distractions, no one ever gets up while I am performing.

"But you ask, will the *phad* survive?" he continued. "Yes, it has to. It is still at the center of our life and our faith and our religion."

This, it seemed to me, was the key, and the answer to the question of how it was that the Rajasthani epics were still living in a way that the Iliad and the other epics of the West were not. The poems remained religious rituals, and the *bhopas* were still receptacles for the messages of the gods, able to penetrate the wall—in India always a fairly porous wall—between the divine and the mundane.

Moreover, the gods in question were not impossibly distant and metaphysical beings but deified locals with whom the herders could relate and who could understand their needs. The Gujars certainly took care to propitiate the great "national" gods, like Shiva and Vishnu, whom they understood as controlling the continuation of the wider cosmos. For everyday needs, however, they prayed to the less remote, less awesome figures of their local herder gods and heroes who—along with the almost numberless pantheon of sprites and godlings, tree spirits and water nymphs that are worshipped and propitiated in every Indian village—know the things that the great gods cannot: the till and soil of the local fields and the sweet water of the wells, the needs and thirsts of the cattle and the goats; and they are believed to guard and regulate the ebb and flow of daily life.

This also had to be the reason that the Dastan-i Amir Hamza had died out: the last great performer of this Muslim epic passed away in Delhi in 1928. The Story of Hamza was always understood to be an entertainment, and so had died as fashions changed. But the *bhopas* and their religious rituals had survived as the needs that they served remained: if your child was sick or your wife unable to conceive, you summoned the *bhopa*.

"Will your children take on this tradition?" I asked Bhero Ram.

"Two of my three boys are interested," he said. "They can see that I am very satisfied with this life. When the gods are asleep"—during the monsoon season—"I stay at home and can do my farming. We have cows and buffalo and goats. In the other months, I travel with my *phad* wherever I want. It's a good life."

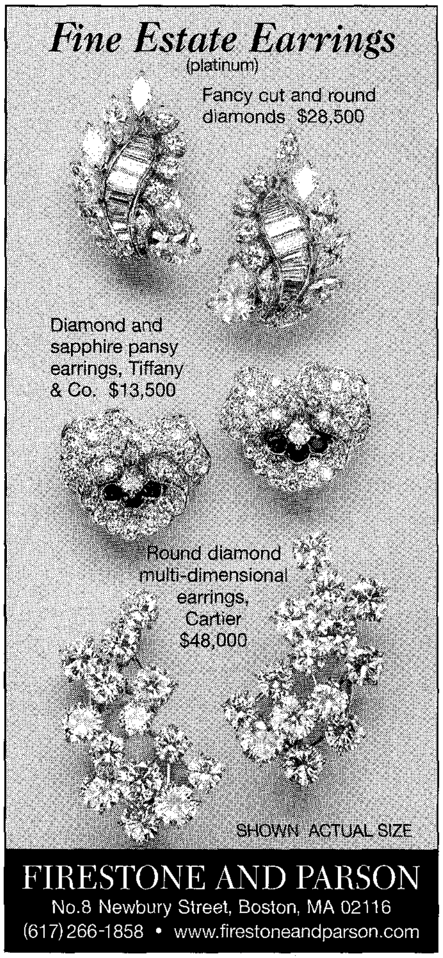
The shadows were lengthening, and a large crowd was already beginning to gather. The cows had been given fodder, and, crucially for herders in a desert land, they had been given water—echoing the key episode and the climactic moment in the Pabuji epic:

> O Pabuji, the cows' little calves are
> weeping;
> the cows' little calves are calling out to
> Pabuji. . . .
> O Pabuji, may your name remain
> immortal in the land;
> O Pabuji, may your brave leading
> warriors remain immortal!

Bhero Ram's assistant had now appeared with the furled *phad*, and one of Bhero's sons was standing by impatiently, holding his *dholak*.

"I must go," the *bhopa* said. "The performance must begin at sunset."

He paused, then added, "I have a long night ahead of me." ◆



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THE POLITICAL SCENE

DOWNFALL

How Donald Rumsfeld reformed the Army and lost Iraq.

BY PETER J. BOYER

The improbable restoration of Donald H. Rumsfeld to the seat of American military power was consummated on a cold Friday afternoon in January, 2001, when he was welcomed back to the Pentagon with a full-honors review. The ceremony, a ritual display of martial pomp and fanfare, was staged on the River Parade Field, the vast lawn on the Potomac side of the Pentagon, where Rumsfeld had been welcomed as Gerald Ford's Defense Secretary a quarter century earlier. Standing before the assemblage, Rumsfeld seemed like a figure lifted from another age. He had run the Pentagon in the time of the Berlin Wall, the era of Brezhnev and Kissinger, and the reunification of Vietnam under a Communist regime. Then he was the youngest-ever Secretary of Defense; now, at sixty-eight, he became one of the oldest, and the only man ever to serve in the position twice. His selection by George W. Bush had been a surprise, not least to Rumsfeld himself ("What in the world am I doing here?" he sometimes asked himself). Rumsfeld had been out of government since 1977, and although he was still well connected, he had not been a particularly close Bush adviser during the campaign. Even so, when General Henry H. Shelton, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who introduced Rumsfeld at the day's event, and declared him "exactly the right man for the job in this new century," everyone knew what he meant. Bush and Cheney had campaigned as friends of the military—"Help is on the way," the candidates had repeatedly proclaimed—and Rumsfeld, a totem of the Republican national-security establishment, was a promise delivered.

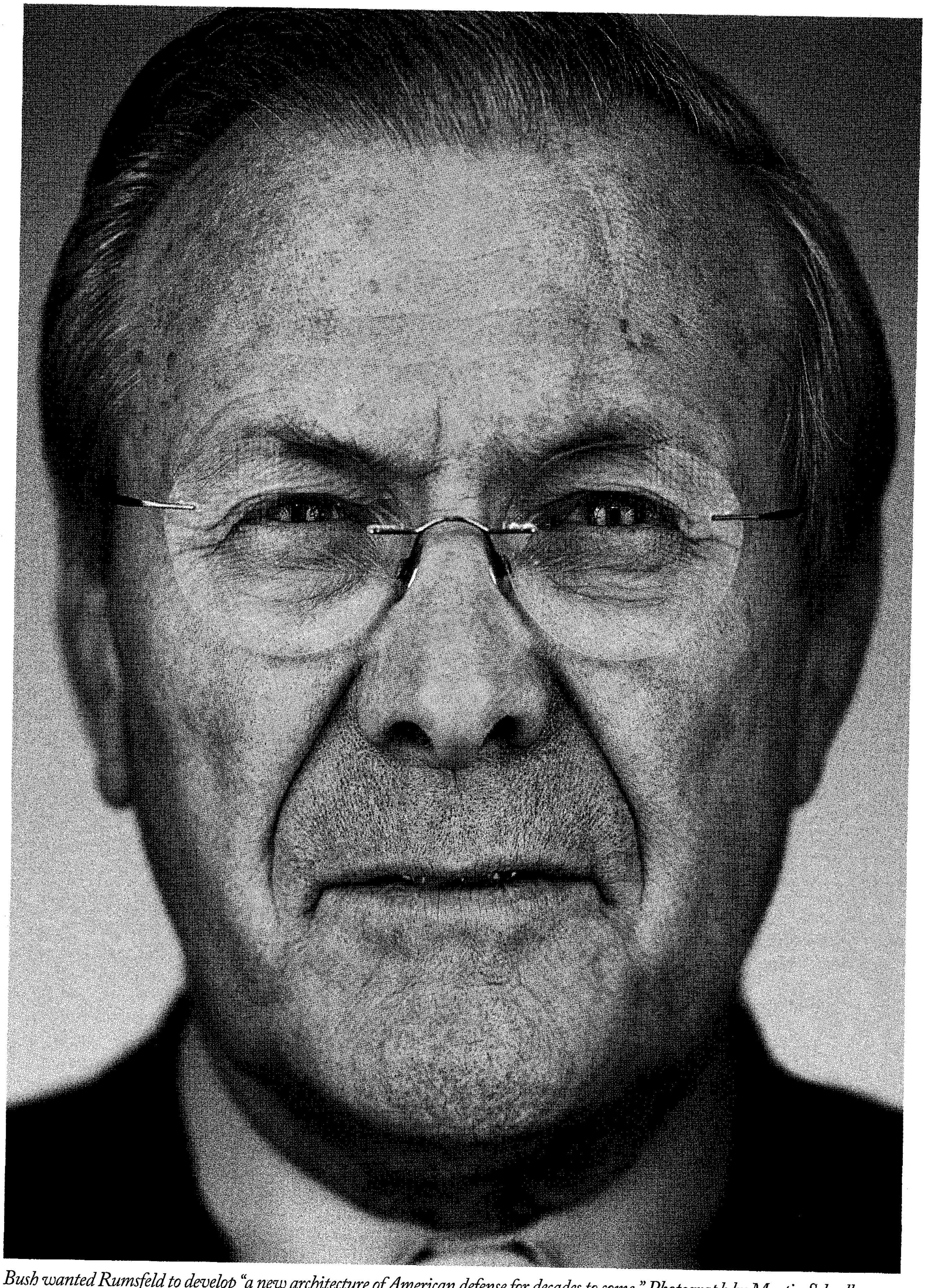
At the ceremony, Rumsfeld declared that the new President's first goal for defense was "to strengthen the bond of trust with the American military." Earlier that day, at Rumsfeld's swearing-in at the White House, the President had used the same phrase and promised to give Americans in uniform "the respect they deserve." The refrain was repeated so often that a reporter finally pressed Rumsfeld to spell out what he and the President really meant: had the "bond of trust" been ruptured by eight years of Bill Clinton? Rumsfeld allowed the question to speak for itself ("I'm looking forward, not back," he said), but no one missed the point: a central message of the Bush-Cheney campaign had been that the American military had somehow needed to be rescued from its Commander-in-Chief.

Of the several partisan fevers that afflicted the Clinton era, none was more acute than that having to do with Clinton and the military. Some of the disaffection reflected Clinton's moment in history: the end of the Cold War offered the chance for a "peace dividend" of a smaller military, which Clinton seized, but, in the eyes of many military leaders, he lacked a consistent doctrine for the use of American power. Early in his first term, a relief mission begun by the elder Bush in Somalia became a military mission aimed at capturing the nettlesome clan leader General Muhammad Farah Aydid. When eighteen Army Rangers were killed and one was dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, Clinton pulled out. The following year, when a humanitarian disaster unfolded in Rwanda, the United States stood aside, at the price of countless lives—for which Clinton later apologized on America's behalf. A "Clinton doctrine" eventually evolved, which defined the national interest partly in terms of humanitarian interventions, a construct that justified bombing in Bosnia, an air war in Kosovo, and the open-ended commitment of American troops to both. To Clinton's critics, it seemed as if American foreign policy were shaped by the latest ghastly images from the nightly news cycle, and Clinton himself seemed to confirm it, saying his aim was a world where "we don't have to worry about seeing scenes every night for the next forty years of ethnic cleansing in some part of the world." The military was deeply skeptical about what it called "operations other than war," such as peacekeeping and nation-building. The added duty for a smaller force put serious strains on the military's readiness for combat as well as its ability to retain people. Toward the end of Clinton's tenure, the Army, Navy, and Air Force each failed to meet its recruitment goals.

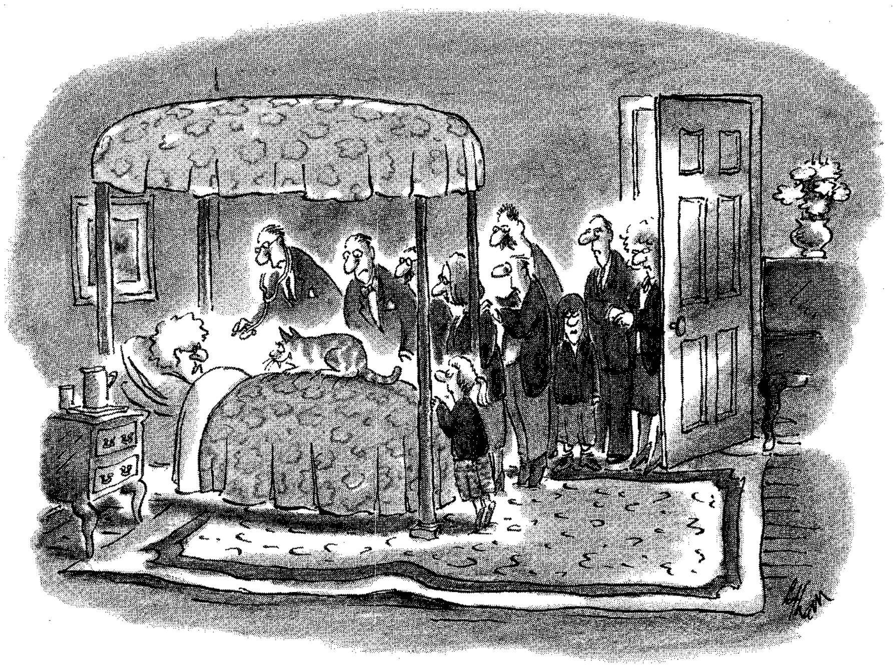
The revelation that President Clinton had had sexual relations with a female subordinate in the Oval Office, and then lied about it, struck a particular nerve in the military, and some of the deeply felt resentments began to surface. One Marine major wrote an article in the *Navy Times* referring to Clinton as "an adulterous liar." Another marine, a reserve officer, wrote an opinion article, in November, 1998, questioning a military officer's obligation to obey the orders of "a morally defective leader." The Marine Corps Deputy Commandant, General Terrence Drake, issued an order to all the Corps's generals to remind their officers of Article 88 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice—the provision prohibiting officers from using "contemptuous words" about the civilian authority.

And so, that January of 2001, when Donald Rumsfeld was officially welcomed back to the Pentagon, "There was just great relief in the military," recalled Kenneth Adelman, a former Reagan arms-control official, who was among the invited guests that day. "There was the feeling that now somebody was going to be on their side."

Bush had inherited a pressing problem. The American military continued through the nineteen-nineties to train, plan, and equip itself to fight an



Bush wanted Rumsfeld to develop "a new architecture of American defense for decades to come." Photograph by Martin Schoeller.



"I want everyone to leave the room, except for the cat."

• •

enemy—the Soviet Union—that no longer existed. It was hardly a secret that the military was badly in need of reform; everyone in uniform knew it, and those analysts and scholars who populated the think tanks of Washington had been fixated on the subject for most of a decade.

As a pro-defense Republican, Bush would have the political capital to bring about genuine, even historic, change. During the campaign, he had vowed to give his Secretary of Defense "a broad mandate to challenge the status quo and envision a new architecture of American defense for decades to come," and he had chosen Rumsfeld because he believed that he would be more willing and better able than the other candidates to pursue his agenda. The contents and scope of that agenda were not yet known, but Rumsfeld made it clear that his approach to the military was very much hands-on.

Among those gathered at the River Parade Field for the Rumsfeld ceremony was an elderly man with a pleasant, grandfatherly aspect, who, amid the political celebrities and military brass, might have been taken for someone who had strayed from a Pentagon tour group. But within the national-security priesthood Andrew Marshall was something of a legend. He headed a unit called the Office of Net Assessment (he was its first and only director), which had evolved over the years into a sort of in-house Pentagon think tank. That made him the resident deep thinker, and what Marshall, who was in his late seventies, had been thinking about for every President since Richard Nixon (and for two decades before that at the Rand Corporation) was how America could prevail in the next big war.

Marshall's professional life had paralleled the full sweep of the Cold War. He was admired as a boldly original theorist; in the forty-year strategic chess match between East and West, it sometimes seemed as if Marshall were playing a three-dimensional game. Marshall was among the very few who understood the Soviet vulnerability, and it was largely Marshall who imagined the strategy for exploiting it—the Reagan-era conceit of a winnable nuclear war, based on technologies (such as the unproved missile-defense shield) and levels of expenditure that the Soviets could not hope to match.

Marshall fell out of favor under the Clinton Administration, which saw less call for an esoteric Cold War strategist. But he had already turned his focus on something that he believed was of immense and pressing importance. It was a new way of thinking about the military, an idea with vast implications for every aspect of American defense, from the nation's weaponry to its global posture, because it would radically change the way America waged war—indeed, it could alter the very nature of war. It was called the Revolution in Military Affairs.

This revolution had begun to unfold in the Cold War's last stages. In the post-Vietnam nineteen-seventies, the Soviet-led forces of the Warsaw Pact conducted a steady, massive buildup of heavy forces—tanks and mechanized infantry—along the western edge of East Germany and Czechoslovakia. Twenty thousand battle tanks, mostly Soviet, faced west; on the other side, NATO fielded a force of only seven thousand tanks. In the event of a conventional Soviet attack, NATO forces would be forced to wage a fighting retreat until reinforcements arrived, mostly from the United States. One option for countering the Soviet advantage was the deployment of "tactical" nuclear weapons to Europe. Tactical nukes posed obvious political and strategic problems—the NATO allies did not welcome the prospect of even limited nuclear war in Europe, and there was always the chance of escalation into full-blown nuclear conflict.

But the Americans were also working on a non-nuclear weapons system that would change the equation. The top-secret Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency was funding a program called Assault Breaker, which was designed to strike far behind enemy lines, disrupting or destroying follow-on forces, gaining time and cover for the Western alliance to launch a counter-offensive. Assault Breaker was meant to compress the process of locating a target and launching a strike into a synchronized target-and-fire action taking just minutes. DARPA equipped an Air Force plane with an advanced radar system and onboard computers that worked out the target's coördinates and transmitted them to an Army missile base, which fired rockets toward the target area. In a test of Assault Breaker at the White Sands Missile Range, in New Mexico, the system hit five out of five targets.

In the early nineteen-eighties, Marshall and his colleagues began to notice in their reading of Soviet military literature that the Russians were writing about this new American weaponry with increasing alarm. The Soviets assumed that deployment of Assault Breaker was imminent, and that this American advance represented the dawn of a new military epoch—what the Soviet analysts referred to as a "military-technical revolution." (The Americans weren't nearly as attuned to the implications of their own developments. Assault Breaker was not close to deployment; in fact, the Air Force and the Army were disinclined to coöperate, and the joint program eventually died.) Marshall began to analyze this idea, and, after months of study, his office concluded that the Russians had got it right. The Red Army's Chief of Staff, Marshal Nikolai V. Ogarkov, had recognized that advances such as those tested by the Americans would give conventional weapons many of the strengths of nuclear weapons, without the apocalyptic effects. Implicit in Ogarkov's insight was the idea that a key breakthrough in technology (for example, microprocessing) could suddenly reconfigure the battlefield—in this case, with accuracy so precise that, Ogarkov wrote, conventional warfare took on "qualitatively new and incomparably more destructive forms than before."

Marshall was struck by this idea, and, throughout the eighties, he assigned teams of analysts to search for historical instances of such advances. ("What's amazing," Marshall told me, "is how much we know, it turns out, about the chariot revolution back in 1700 B.C.") The example he found most compelling was that of Europe in the years between the twentieth century's two World Wars. After the Pyrrhic victory of the First World War, France built the finest Army in the world, and an imposing defensive complex of forts, bunkers, and tunnels—the Maginot Line—along its border with Germany. A defeated Germany, on the other hand, had to overcome the constraints of the Treaty of Versailles (forbidding Germany warplanes, tanks, submarines, or heavy guns, and outlawing its general-officer staff) to build Hitler's Wehrmacht. Yet, in the late spring of 1940, Germany invaded France and won a French surrender in less than six weeks. The stunning German victory was produced by a battlefield innovation, blitzkrieg, that married two relatively new technologies—radio and the internal-combustion engine—to facilitate a tactic of rapid, coördinated movement. The Germans had designed their new panzer divisions to suit this doctrine, and their impact was decisive. The German forces bypassed the Maginot Line, attacked directly through the Ardennes Forest, and dashed to the French rear, sowing chaos en route and forcing a quick surrender.

To Marshall and his associates, the lessons were clear. The side that recognized and exploited such advances gained not just an edge in warfare but an overwhelming advantage; for the side that missed the chance, the consequences could be fatal.

With the impending demise of the Soviet Union, the U.S. was entering a new interwar period. Marshall had no doubt that some new competitor would emerge to challenge the United States, and it struck him as exactly the moment to prepare for the next big war. The U.S. led the world in microchip technology, and the information age promised a dazzling range of military applications, such as advanced sensors, satellite imagery, robotics, and laser systems. The danger would not arise in Europe, Marshall believed, but in Asia—most likely China. The conflict would not be a prolonged ground war, involving massed formations of infantry and tank divisions; rather, there would be long-range precision strikes by "smart" missiles. If there was infantry in the fight at all, it would be in small, specialized units. Marshall supposed, too, that in the global economy these technologies would be available to all. This made it imperative that the U.S. push conflicts to distant battlefields, if possible, and to reduce (or eliminate) such easy American targets as overseas airbases and huge aircraft-carrier battle groups.

In July, 1992, during the race between George H. W. Bush and Clinton, Marshall gave the Pentagon's senior leaders a formal assessment reflecting his conclusions about the Revolution in Military Affairs. Marshall preferred that term to the Russians' "military-technical revolution," because he believed that technology only partly accounted for such bursts of progress. The other critical element was a military's adoption of entirely new operational concepts, organizational structures, and doctrines. For instance, the French and British had radios, tanks, and airplanes in 1940, but Germany put them to novel use. Marshall wrote that new ideas had to be tested, even if most

Victoria Roberts

"I'm going to France—I'm a different person in France."

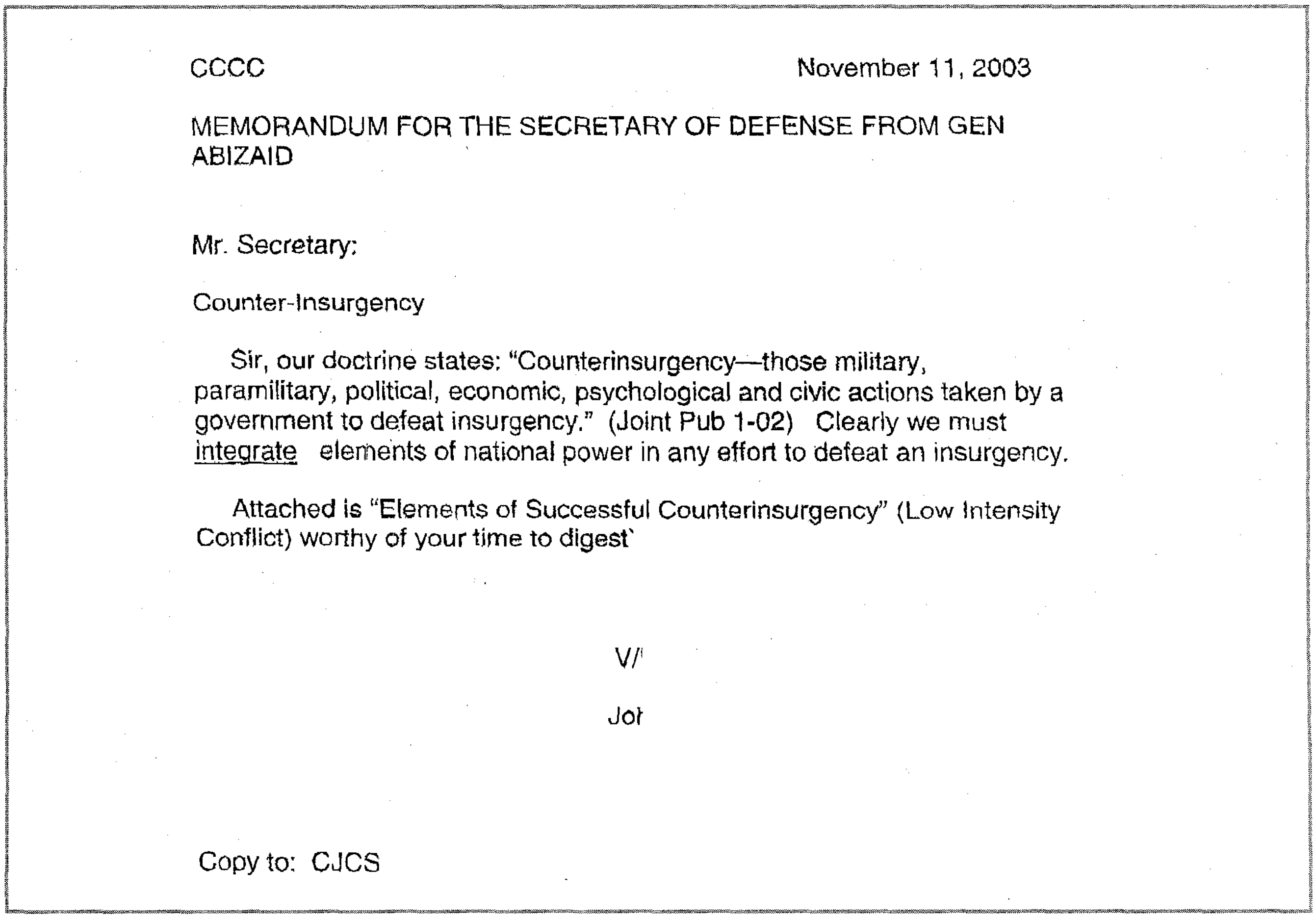
of them failed. Perhaps most important, the Pentagon needed to stop depending exclusively on the big-ticket weapons that devoured defense dollars and perpetuated the status quo.

Marshall's assessment came just as the national-security establishment was trying to define America's posture in a world without a Soviet counterweight. Some, including the first President Bush, Brent Scowcroft, his national-security adviser, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, were avowed "realists," who believed that America's role was to be part of a new world order, with the emphasis on order. But others believed that the U.S. should embrace and, if possible, enhance its position as the world's sole superpower. Bush's Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney, was inclined to this view, as was his top policy official, Paul Wolfowitz, who argued emphatically that the United States should strengthen its military superiority so that potential rivals would have no hope of catching up. Marshall's Revolution in Military Affairs offered a means to achieve that goal, and both Cheney and Wolfowitz became converts.

There were also converts within the uniformed military, including a few in the senior ranks, but the services were generally skeptical about the R.M.A., as it was now being called. Some of the resistance, particularly in the Army, reflected the belief that Marshall's vision of long-distance precision strikes ignored the gritty reality of actual war, with soldiers on the ground. Had President George H. W. Bush won another term, he might have been willing to impose upon the military the upheaval that a revolution in military affairs implied. But the last thing the Army was inclined to do while facing cutbacks under the Clinton Administration was tinker with its revered divisional structure, and the Navy was no less inclined to reduce the number of its aircraft-carrier battle groups. Clinton's last Secretary of Defense, William S. Cohen, had tried to get the Army to transform itself into a lighter, more expeditionary force. But Cohen, a Republican, was frustrated from the start. "I was coming into a Democratic Administration, and that had its own dynamic," Cohen recalled. "I must say that President Clinton gave me total authority, so it wasn't a question coming from him. But just dealing with the issue—how do you push transformation in a Democratic Administration? Is this something that's weakening the military? The perception on the Hill would be 'Here they go cutting back on the military powers of the Army.'"

Still, Marshall continued to promote his revolution. Using his budget at the Office of Net Assessment, he financed his own futuristic war games. The Revolution in Military Affairs thrived in think tanks and seminars.

As Marshall watched Rumsfeld's official welcoming ceremony, he was hopeful that the revolution's moment had arrived. During the Presidential campaign, George W. Bush had promised to build a new American military for the twenty-first century. In a speech



CCCC November 11, 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FROM GEN ABIZAID

Mr. Secretary:

Counter-Insurgency

Sir, our doctrine states: "Counterinsurgency—those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency." (Joint Pub 1-02) Clearly we must integrate elements of national power in any effort to defeat an insurgency.

Attached is "Elements of Successful Counterinsurgency" (Low Intensity Conflict) worthy of your time to digest

V/

Jo

Copy to: CJCS

In 2003, General John Abizaid, Rumsfeld's top commander in Iraq, sent his boss a memo with the definition of "counter-insurgency."

at the Citadel in 1999, Bush had said that as President he would instruct his Defense Secretary to conduct a "comprehensive review" of the military, to question everything from its force structure and strategy to its acquisition process. He promised not just to make "marginal improvements" but "to replace existing programs with new technologies and strategies, to use this window of opportunity to skip a generation of technology." That speech was instantly recognized, by those with a trained ear, as the language of the Revolution in Military Affairs.

Marshall had known Rumsfeld over the years, and he liked him. Shortly after Rumsfeld's induction, the new Secretary arranged to have lunch with Marshall—not, as Marshall had expected, in Rumsfeld's private office but in the "Sec Def Mess," a nearby dining room where the guests seldom went unnoticed. "Oh, I think it was very clear," Richard Perle, a former Reagan defense official and a close adviser to Rumsfeld, recalled. "It went all over the building that Andy was back. It was like Deng Xiaoping's return." The President had pledged to conduct a comprehensive review, identifying probable American adversaries, and when and where the next wars would likely occur. Rumsfeld asked Marshall if he would like to take something like that on. Marshall said he could put a team together right away. The Pentagon's traditional review process, the Quadrennial Defense Review, was just getting under way, and wouldn't be finished for another nine months. Hundreds of uniformed staff officers from all the services had spent tens of thousands of man-hours trying to answer essentially those questions. This review tended to be an exercise in justifying the budgets, force size, and programs that the military services wanted to protect. Rumsfeld evidently intended to circumvent that process. He told Marshall that he'd like to have the first draft of his strategic review in six weeks. "We delivered on that," Marshall recalled.

Word of Marshall's new assignment rang through the Pentagon like a distress signal, which may have been part of Rumsfeld's plan. Rumsfeld had in mind for the military, and for the Pentagon itself, an agenda of radical reform. He called it "transformation," and the return of Andrew Marshall meant that it would be guided by the principles of the Revolution in Military Affairs. Rumsfeld intended to remake the American military into a lighter, more agile, more readily useful force that would be able to leverage new technology to project lethal power over great distances.

Marshall would have been the first to say that technology and the Revolution in Military Affairs had very little application to certain kinds of conflict, such as a counter-insurgency fight against some indigenous guerrilla force. But that was the sort of war that no one—on the new Bush national-security team, or certainly in the American military—had any intention of ever fighting. That would be a war like Vietnam.

When war came, with the invasion of Afghanistan, in late 2001, Rumsfeld had only the barest beginnings of a transformed military, but he had a fully formed philosophy that dictated how America would fight. In Afghanistan, it meant routing the Taliban with small bands of American Special Forces and coördinating long-distance air strikes and Afghan ground troops. For the subsequent invasion of Iraq, in March, 2003, the Rumsfeld vision meant getting to Baghdad and toppling Saddam Hussein's regime as quickly and with as small a force as prudence permitted. Many professional military men strenuously disagreed with Rumsfeld's war plan, but, fresh from the validating triumph in Afghanistan, he prevailed.

The man who came to exemplify this new way of war was Major General Buford (Buff) Blount, a courtly Mississippian who commanded the Army's 3rd Infantry Division—the 3rd I.D.—and who became a popular figure with reporters. ABC's Ted Koppel rode with Blount, as did the late David Bloom, the NBC News correspondent whose dust-blown satellite video reports provided the signature images of the conflict's early days, and Michael Kelly, the *Atlantic* editor, who died in a skirmish near Baghdad. The 3rd I.D., with its tanks and armored fighting vehicles, was, by training and structure, a relic of the pre-Rumsfeld Army. But Blount was a creative, daring general, who, after weathering a brief storm delay, pushed quickly through to Baghdad. And it was Blount who devised and executed the "thunder runs" from the outskirts of Baghdad to the heart of the Iraqi capital, providing the decisive blow in the stunningly short campaign to end the Saddam regime.

But within a few weeks Rumsfeld and his closest advisers came to regard Blount as part of a problem they had not foreseen and were wholly unprepared to handle: the gathering chaos that soon became an insurgency.

With American troops in Baghdad, General Tommy Franks, the top commander of the coalition forces, left his headquarters in Doha, Qatar, and flew in a Kevlar-lined helicopter and then a C-130 transport plane to Baghdad. He made his way to the Abu Ghraib North Palace, where he and his commanders shared a victory cigar, and Franks told them to start preparing to leave Iraq.

Blount's 3rd I.D. had been slated to go home, and his troops, having stormed into Baghdad, considered their mission accomplished. But the days passed, and Blount's unit found itself faced with a policing mission it didn't want and hadn't expected. Scores of looters appeared, and then hundreds and thousands, making off with anything that could be carried away.

"Never, from the first day that we ever started planning this until we got to Baghdad, in all the processes, rehearsals—nobody ever mentioned the word 'looter,'" Blount told me. "I mean, it was just never, ever, ever mentioned. Our focus was on fighting the war." Blount was loath to order his troops to use deadly force on looters. As he saw it, the raiders were indulging an impulse to street justice. "These are the people that we're liberating," he recalled. "The oppressed. You know, that have been without for centuries now, and they've got nothing, and they're trying to get a little bit back from the Baath Party."

Blount ordered patrols to secure hospitals, power facilities, and other key structures, but in many cases the looters had already come and gone. As it became apparent in Washington that the disorder might spin out of control, the 3rd I.D.'s pullout was delayed. At the division's home base, in Georgia, some of the troops' spouses began to voice their dismay, and in Baghdad, some of Blount's soldiers complained to reporters. One, a private named Matthew C. O'Dell, told the *Times*, "You call Donald Rumsfeld and tell him our sorry asses are ready to go home."

Blount's superiors in the Pentagon were furious, blaming his unit's recalcitrance on a lack of leadership. "We had no orders or plans to occupy Baghdad," Blount says. "There were just a lot of assumptions made. I've looked back at this a good bit at different times, wondering, you know, well, could we have done something differently?"

General Jack Keane, then the Army's Vice Chief of Staff and one of Rumsfeld's most trusted advisers in the force, flew to Iraq and was chagrined that the 3rd I.D.'s briefings failed to focus on containing the spreading disorder. But Keane later reflected that Blount's troops could hardly be blamed. "They were ill-prepared—they weren't educated to do it, and they weren't trained to do it, and they weren't expecting to do it," Keane said, of the unit's impromptu policing mission. When the 3rd I.D. eventually left Iraq, four months later, Blount was assigned to a desk job at the Pentagon, a role he served in for the remainder of his active career. He did not get a promotion and a third star, as many had once expected.

As chaos spread in and around Baghdad, Rumsfeld remained publicly serene. "You don't go from despotism to freedom on a feather bed," he told reporters on April 24th. Pressed to explain the vivid images of chaos in Iraq, Rumsfeld dryly observed that "freedom's untidy." From the start of the new Bush Administration, Rumsfeld had been the Administration's lightning rod, and he seemed almost to relish controversy. Just a few months into his tenure, as he was making enemies inside the Pentagon's bureaucracy with his insistent reform crusade, and on the Hill with his reluctance to pay deference, the political press had begun a deathwatch on his career. Maureen Dowd mocked him as Rip Van Rummy, and *Slate* observed, "Rumsfeld is probably toast." But by the time Baghdad fell, Rumsfeld believed he had seen his critics proved wrong so often that he had every reason to rely on his instincts. Two weeks before the Iraq invasion, a reporter had asked him, "Can you promise it won't be a quagmire?"

"I can almost promise you that someone in this room will say it's a quagmire," Rumsfeld replied. Indeed, by the second week of the drive to Baghdad, reporters had summoned the "quagmire" scenario, only to be chastened by the rapid fall of Saddam's regime. The subsequent failure of the search for weapons of mass destruction, whose existence had been a major justification for the war, may have been a blow to the Administration's credibility (as well as a distraction for troops engaged in the hunt), but it did not seem to affect Rumsfeld's certainty in his own judgment. More and more, he met questions about the progress of the mission in Iraq with ironic (and, some would say, arrogant) deflection.

"You have to know how to work the machine."

In April, as the situation in the streets of Iraq grew messier, Rumsfeld said that "free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things." More pointedly, he refused to dignify the chaos with a name that might summon memories of Vietnam. To many conservatives, the Iraq war, quite apart from its strategic implications, was a way of exorcising those ghosts, a chance to demonstrate the national will and military prowess that had arisen in the decades since the humiliating withdrawal from Indochina. Long after others, on the ground in Iraq and even within Rumsfeld's inner circle in Washington, discerned the ominous signs of a gathering insurgency, Rumsfeld insistently declined to call it such.

Jack Keane, the Vice Chief of Staff, says that he was the first to raise the matter in the Tank, the super-secure Pentagon meeting room of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "I said, 'This is a low-level insurgency,' and I told them what the definition of that was, and what it looked like," Keane said. "They were targeting Americans, and it was organized. It was being done at multiple locations, which meant that there had to be some general guidance. . . . The operations they were conducting had some basic complexity to it. They were planned, and thought out, and well executed, in the sense that they were achieving success. They were killing us."

It was not a welcome observation, as General Richard B. Myers, then the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, made clear, according to Keane. "I got some pushback from the chairman, and he said, 'We've gotta be careful about that word,' " Keane said.

Rumsfeld's deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, also sensed that what was happening in Iraq was more than the untidy impulses of a newly free people. In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, two months after the fall of Baghdad, he conceded, “There’s a guerrilla war there, but . . . we can win it.”

Wolfowitz, too, got pushback, both from Rumsfeld and from Tommy Franks, who said three weeks later that “guerrilla and insurgency operations are supported by the people, and I’ve demonstrated to my own satisfaction that the people of Iraq do not support the violence that we’re seeing right now.”

Keane said, “They thought maybe it wouldn’t be that bad, and there’s no sense using those names associated with it, because you’re gonna stomp it out in a couple, three months—it wasn’t worth all the rhetoric.”

In a remarkable exchange with reporters at a Pentagon briefing in late June, a reporter read Rumsfeld a dictionary definition of “guerrilla war” and asked why he was so reluctant to name it as such. “Can you remind us again why this isn’t a quagmire?” the reporter asked. Rumsfeld replied, in his best vice-principal tone, as if patronizing a particularly dull student, “I guess the reason I don’t use the phrase ‘guerrilla war’ is because there isn’t one, and it would be a misunderstanding and a miscommunication to you and to the people of the country and the world.” He explained that the disturbances in Iraq were being caused by looters, criminals, remnants of the regime, foreign terrorists, and Iranian agents. “Doesn’t make it anything like a guerrilla war or an organized resistance. It makes it like five different things going on that are functioning much more like terrorists. . . . Now, that is not—it doesn’t fit that word. So, I think, that if one analyzes what is going on in that country, they would find a different way to characterize it. I know it’s nice to be—have a bumper sticker, but it’s the wrong bumper sticker.”

At this, the reporter pulled out the official Defense Department definition of “guerrilla war” (“I knew I should have looked it up!” Rumsfeld said. “I could die that I didn’t look it up!”): “ ‘Military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy-held or hostile territory by irregular, predominantly indigenous forces.’ This seems to fit a lot of what’s going on in Iraq.”

To which Rumsfeld replied, “It really doesn’t.”

Two weeks later, Rumsfeld’s top commander on the ground, General John Abizaid, a Rumsfeld favorite, who had just taken over the leadership of the Army’s Central Command from Tommy Franks, addressed the question squarely. The insurgents who were attacking Americans, Abizaid said, “are conducting what I would describe as a classical guerrilla-type campaign against us. It’s low-intensity conflict in our doctrinal terms, but it’s war however you describe it.”

Abizaid, a Lebanese-American who speaks Arabic, went on to note that the insurgents were mostly mid-level Baathists, members of Saddam’s Special Republican Guard and security services, and that they had organized regionally into cells. For his efforts, Keane says, Abizaid “got his ass handed to him.”

The American invading force had prepared for a chemical assault from Saddam’s Army, for a set-piece battle with Saddam’s armored units, and for a long, bloody battle for Baghdad. “What we didn’t plan for,” says Jack Keane, “is what happened.”

The American military had spent thirty years avoiding the thought of fighting a counter-insurgency, a subject that hadn’t been part of the curriculum at West Point since the Vietnam era. The proud, professional volunteer force constructed since Vietnam was not built for a protracted occupation, an eventuality that, in any case, the nation’s political leadership reflexively rejected out of hand. Bill Clinton fought a war in Kosovo by announcing at the outset that the commitment of ground troops was not an option; the Bush Administration came into power renouncing the idea of nation-building as a foolish misuse of military resources.

But the inability quickly to recognize and formulate a coherent strategy to fight the insurgency that arose in Iraq reflected more than the military’s institutional biases, or Donald Rumsfeld’s intransigence. It also partly reflected a crucial policy decision in Washington, which effectively dashed any chance that the coalition forces would be received as liberators rather than as occupiers.

The circle of defense advisers that had most ardently advocated the Iraqi invasion, including Richard Perle and Newt Gingrich, had imagined a strategy that wouldn’t require a lasting American presence in postwar Iraq. The plan depended on the recruitment and training of “free Iraqis” to participate in the combat phase of the operation, and the imposition of a provisional government, run mostly by Iraqi exiles, after the war. Something like that had worked in Afghanistan, and, the reasoning went, the approach stood an even better chance of working in Iraq; Iraqi exiles had been planning for such an eventuality for more than a decade. But the program to train Iraqi fighters produced fewer than a hundred recruits; it also ignored the reality that prominent exiles like Ahmad Chalabi had less credibility, and less of an indigenous base, than those whom the U.S. had relied on in Afghanistan. The Defense Department’s plan to set up a provisional Iraqi government was abandoned after a bitter interagency argument within the Bush Administration that lasted until the very eve of the war. The State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency refused to endorse the imposition of a provisional government composed of Iraqi exiles, arguing that it would not be seen as legitimate. In the end, Rumsfeld surrendered on the point—to the lasting distress of the hawks nearest him. “I think he made a serious mistake,” Perle, a member of Rumsfeld’s advisory Defense Policy Board, recalled. “I think he underestimated the importance of getting those matters right.”

President Bush, with Rumsfeld’s approval, ultimately decided that postwar Iraq would be governed by an American-led Coalition Provisional Authority, to be headed by a veteran diplomat, L. Paul Bremer. With that appointment, and the implicit personal authority conveyed therein, came a critical, and not entirely intended, shift in American postwar policy. Bremer became the American proconsul in Iraq, technically reporting to Rumsfeld’s Defense Department but exercising a degree of authority that came to surprise even Rumsfeld. Bremer began his tenure, in May,

"Oops—I think that was a tan line."

• •

2003, by issuing a series of edicts that included the disbanding of the Iraqi Army and the removal of senior Baath Party members from government jobs. (Bremer said that he was acting on instructions from the Pentagon.) The edicts signalled that Baathists would have no place in the new Iraq, but they also crippled the bureaucracy and eliminated the most important instrument of Iraqi unity and a crucial tool in establishing order. In effect, half a million men, many with guns, were sent into the streets.

These moves had a decisive impact on the coalition's response to the widening insurgency. A huge instant bureaucracy was set up inside the walls of Saddam's former Republican Palace, where Americans laboriously laid plans for undertakings ranging from the design of a new Iraqi flag to the restructuring of the Iraqi monetary system. Meanwhile, no coherent, unified plan to fight the insurgency emerged, which rendered such plans increasingly abstract. "It was Alice in Wonderland," recalled Gary Anderson, a defense specialist who was dispatched to Iraq by Paul Wolfowitz to help set up an Iraqi civil-defense corps. "It was surreal. I mean, I was so depressed the second time we went there, to see the lack of progress and the continuing confusion. The lack of coherence. You'd get two separate briefs, two separate cuts on the same subject, from the military and from the civilians."

To Wolfowitz and others who had advocated the quickest possible turnover of authority to Iraqis, the C.P.A. was a maddening obstacle to the ever-dwindling hope of replicating the Afghanistan success. "There was an explicit, coherent strategy," recalled Newt Gingrich, another influential neoconservative member of Rumsfeld's Defense Policy Board. "It was the strategy of staying light, getting in, rebuilding the Iraqis quickly, and getting out. The war plan was right. Bremer thought he was MacArthur in Japan. And Bremer, in thirty days, destroyed the strategy. And neither Bush nor Cheney nor Rumsfeld would intervene decisively enough, and neither would Franks or Abizaid. It was one of the most amazing strategic mistakes I've ever seen."

Such comments may be the retrospective rationale of men who'd advanced a war policy that had gone bad. Events in Iraq have provided no compelling evidence that the war hawks' plan stood any real chance of success, even if it had been followed. But Bremer did come to symbolize an occupying force that did not seem intent upon leaving anytime soon. "When one now looks back," Douglas J. Feith, the Under-Secretary of Defense, would later observe, "and says, huh, we had an insurgency, and the insurgents were able to capitalize on the widespread perception that the United States wanted to occupy, own, exploit, and stay for a long time running Iraq—and that enormously valuable piece of information operations by the bad guys was facilitated by the way we organized the C.P.A. I mean, one can look back, make that point, and then say, what a dumb, obvious error."

As the weeks turned into ever more bloody months, it became increasingly clear that the coalition could lose in Iraq. General Abizaid, the CENTCOM commander, knew that the coalition had to have a single, coherent counter-insurgency strategy, and it had to have one soon.

On November 11, 2003, Abizaid sent a memorandum to Rumsfeld, in which he provided the Secretary with the definition of "counter-insurgency," taken from the Pentagon's own dictionary of military terms:

> Sir, our doctrine states: "Counterinsurgency—those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency." . . . Clearly we must *integrate* elements of national power in any effort to defeat an insurgency.

Abizaid attached to the memo a one-page primer called "Elements of Successful Counterinsurgency" ("worthy of your time to digest," Abizaid noted to Rumsfeld), which included the advice to "develop a coordinated, integrated plan based on an accurate assessment of the insurgency's goals, techniques, and strategies." It is difficult to imagine that, at that late date, the Secretary of Defense needed to be told the meaning of "counter-insurgency," but the likely purpose of Abizaid's memo is no less remarkable. Seven months after the fall of Baghdad, the Administration still lacked a strategy for countering an enemy it did not fully understand. Abizaid's memo underscoring the need for an "integrated" strategy arrived at the same moment that Bremer was summoned to Washington for a series of meetings that effectively reined him in. He returned to Baghdad with instructions to hasten the timetable for establishing Iraqi sovereignty. (Bremer said that the new timetable was his idea.)

Insurgency and the means to combat it soon became the hot new subjects in military circles; books on counterinsurgency, such as John Nagl's "Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife," became required reading around the Pentagon and among junior military officers. Rumsfeld himself never quite surrendered to the language of Vietnam—preferring terms such as "terrorists" to "guerrillas" or "insurgents"—but he'd long since realized that Iraq had devolved into something much worse than untidy. Just a month before Abizaid's memo reached him, Rumsfeld had written to four top Pentagon officials, conceding that the war in Iraq would be "a long, hard slog."

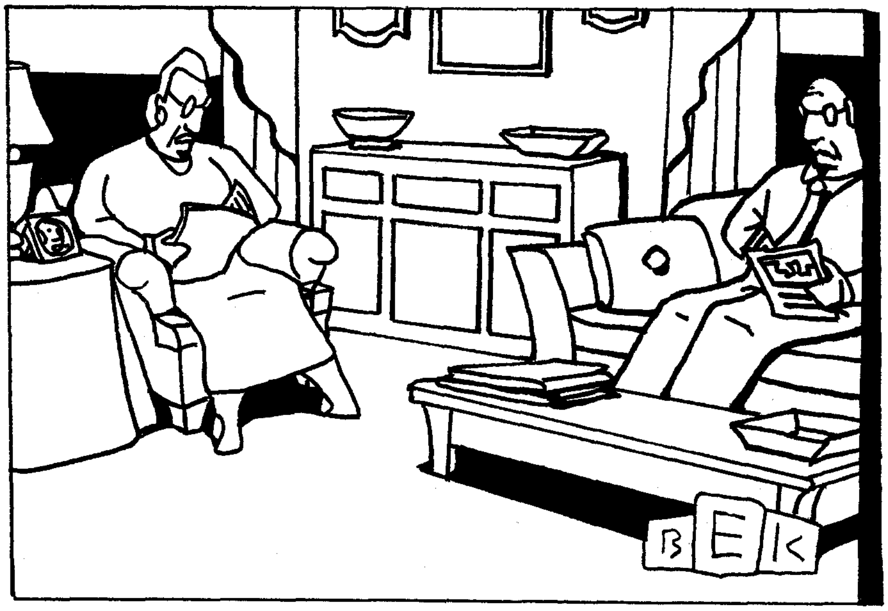
By the end of George W. Bush's fifth year in office, the inner core of true believers around Rumsfeld, such Iraq hawks as Wolfowitz and Feith, were mostly gone from the Pentagon. Rumsfeld, meanwhile, was poised to become the longest-serving Defense Secretary ever, and was already a powerful token of the war itself, freighted with all its failures and controversies, from the abuses at Abu Ghraib to the harsh interrogation policy that Rumsfeld had personally endorsed. Among Democrats, insistence upon Rumsfeld's resignation became a kind of litmus test of antiwar seriousness. By the time of the 2006 midterm elections, more than a few Republicans were inclined to concur.

To the end, Rumsfeld seemed to embrace the controversy. When, on the day after the election—an emphatic no-confidence vote on Rumsfeld's war—he joined Bush at the White House and his departure from the Pentagon was announced, Rumsfeld could not resist comparing himself to another civilian warrior who believed himself misunderstood by his critics. "I have benefitted greatly from the criticism," he said, invoking Churchill, "and at no time have I suffered from the lack thereof."

In some way, Rumsfeld's long tenure has brought the relationship between the military and its civilian leadership full circle. At the end of the Clinton Administration, some uniformed critics of the President had to be warned about possible insubordination; Rumsfeld inspired similar passion among some senior military leaders. This spring, what appeared to be a coördinated wave of criticism of Rumsfeld by retired generals moved some of their peers to suggest that they, too, be mindful of the prohibition on "contemptuous" remarks. On March 19th, General Paul Eaton, who had been in charge of training Iraqi troops before his retirement, last January, wrote in the *Times* that the Defense Secretary "has shown himself incompetent strategically, operationally and tactically and is far more than anyone else responsible for what has happened to America's mission in Iraq. Rumsfeld must step down." Lieutenant General Greg Newbold, who retired in 2002, called for Rumsfeld's resignation in *Time* in an essay that cited "McNamara-like micromanagement" and stated that "a fundamentally flawed plan was executed for an invented war, while pursuing the real enemy, al-Qaeda, became a secondary effort."

Rumsfeld had arrived at the Pentagon convinced that the American military had to be broken down and rebuilt, and he had done just that. In Rumsfeld's six-year tenure, he had initiated a dizzying list of reforms, some deemed necessary even by his critics, from the restructuring of the Army's once-cumbersome fighting formations to the repositioning of American forces abroad, shifting them away from Western Europe. Less visible change was brought to the military culture, especially in the Army, which now sees itself as the force of first resort—an attitude once reserved for the Marines. But it is also true that the Iraq war has severely stressed the Army, and Rumsfeld's reluctance to significantly increase the size of the force has it stretched to its limits. It is a war-honed and immeasurably more knowledgeable Army, precisely because it is bound up in a conflict with no apparent end, facing a resourceful enemy who daily presents some new lethal challenge. It has truly been transformed, but not in the manner that Andy Marshall would have prescribed, or foreseen. It is caught in a de-facto civil war that has cost the lives of more than twenty-eight hundred service members, and those of many times that number of Iraqis.

Donald Rumsfeld might have made a fine peacetime Defense Secretary. But it may also be that Rumsfeld would never have lasted in peacetime. He survived in the job because war came, and he used the wars to force change upon a recalcitrant professional military. In a real sense, the war in Iraq allowed Rumsfeld to create his transformed military, even while presenting it with a mission that it may not be able to win—a war like Vietnam. ♦



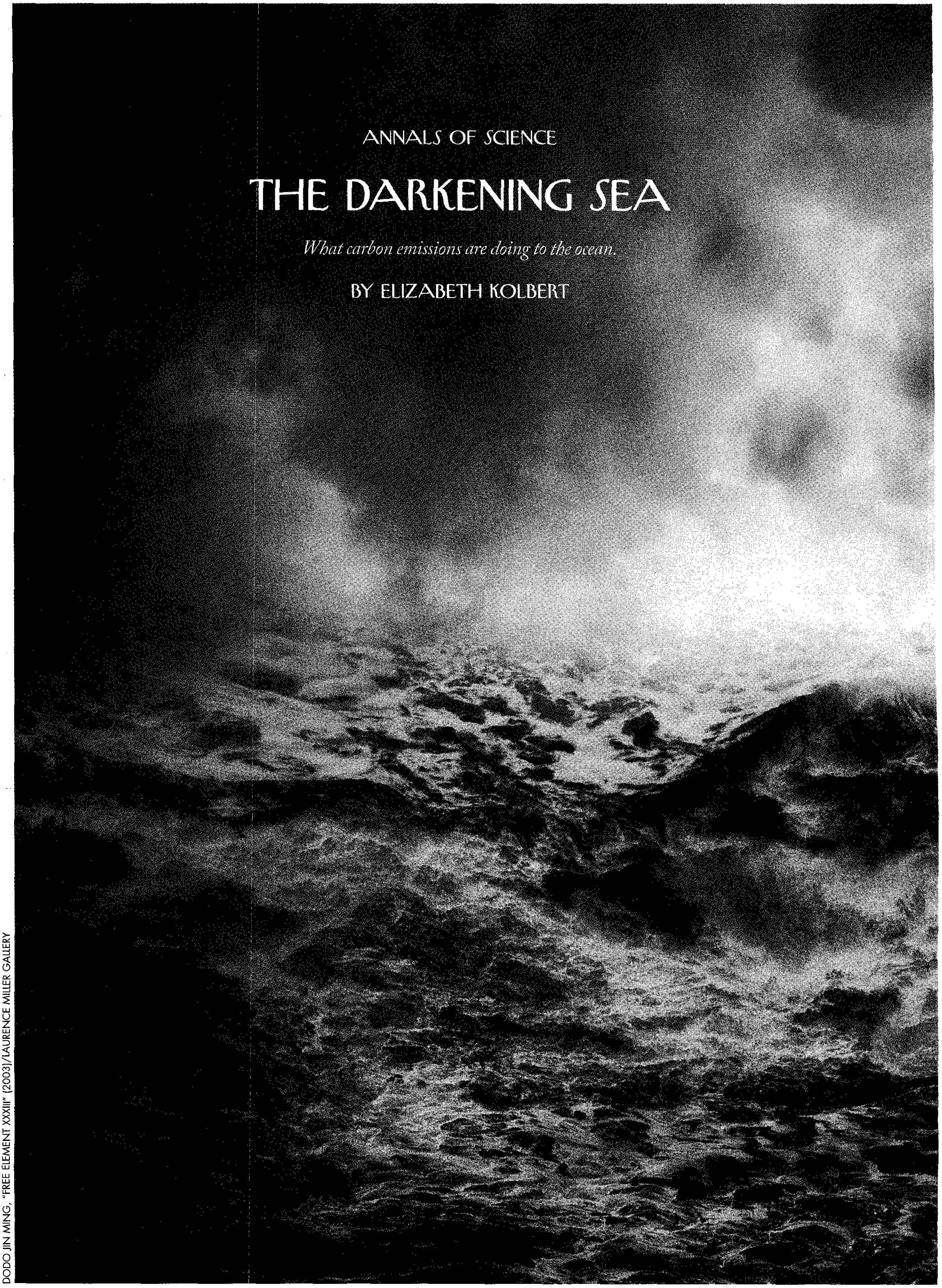
"Would you care to put your filthy paws on me?"

ANNALS OF SCIENCE

THE DARKENING SEA

What carbon emissions are doing to the ocean.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT



DODO JIN MING, "FREE ELEMENT XXXIII" (2003)/LAURENCE MILLER GALLERY

Pteropods are tiny marine organisms that belong to the very broad class known as zooplankton. Related to snails, they swim by means of a pair of winglike gelatinous flaps and feed by entrapping even tinier marine creatures in a bubble of mucus. Many pteropod species—there are nearly a hundred in all—produce shells, apparently for protection; some of their predators, meanwhile, have evolved specialized tentacles that they employ much as diners use forks to spear escargot. Pteropods are first male, but as they grow older they become female.

Victoria Fabry, an oceanographer at California State University at San Marcos, is one of the world's leading experts on pteropods. She is slight and soft-spoken, with wavy black hair and blue-green eyes. Fabry fell in love with the ocean as a teen-ager after visiting the Outer Banks, off North Carolina, and took up pteropods when she was in graduate school, in the early nineteen-eighties. At that point, most basic questions about the animals had yet to be answered, and, for her dissertation, Fabry decided to study their shell growth. Her plan was to raise pteropods in tanks, but she ran into trouble immediately. When disturbed, pteropods tend not to produce the mucus bubbles, and slowly starve. Fabry tried using bigger tanks for her pteropods, but the only correlation, she recalled recently, was that the more time she spent improving the tanks "the quicker they died." After a while, she resigned herself to constantly collecting new specimens. This, in turn, meant going out on just about any research ship that would have her.

Fabry developed a simple, if brutal, protocol that could be completed at sea. She would catch some pteropods, either by trawling with a net or by scuba diving, and place them in one-litre bottles filled with seawater, to which she had added a small amount of radioactive calcium 45. Forty-eight hours later, she would remove the pteropods from the bottles, dunk them in warm ethanol, and pull their bodies out with a pair of tweezers. Back on land, she would measure how much calcium 45 their shells had taken up during their two days of captivity.

In the summer of 1985, Fabry got a berth on a research vessel sailing from Honolulu to Kodiak Island. Late in the trip, near a spot in the Gulf of Alaska known as Station Papa, she came upon a profusion of *Clio pyramidata*, a half-inch-long pteropod with a shell the shape of an unfurled umbrella. In her enthusiasm, Fabry collected too many specimens; instead of putting two or three in a bottle, she had to cram in a dozen. The next day, she noticed that something had gone wrong. "Normally, their shells are transparent," she said. "They look like little gems, little jewels. They're just beautiful. But I could see that, along the edge, they were becoming opaque, chalky."

Like other animals, pteropods take in oxygen and give off carbon dioxide as a waste product. In the open sea, the CO_2 they produce has no effect. Seal them in a small container, however, and the CO_2 starts to build up, changing the water's chemistry. By overcrowding her *Clio pyramidata*, Fabry had demonstrated that the organisms were highly sensitive to such changes. Instead of growing, their shells were dissolving. It stood to reason that other kinds of pteropods—and, indeed, perhaps any number of shell-building species—were similarly vulnerable. This should have represented a major discovery, and a cause for alarm. But, as is so often the case with inadvertent breakthroughs, it went unremarked upon. No one on the boat, including Fabry, appreciated what the pteropods were telling them, because no one, at that point, could imagine the chemistry of an entire ocean changing.

MORE IN DREAMS THAN IN THE FLESH

No wind. No storm.
Just the trees heaving in their own sorrow.
The girl next door who went missing a week ago
Has come back; the faces of her parents stare
Like bare, wounded hills beyond the river.
Often a dream makes one afraid
Of the things one might do. It frightens one
That despair seems to have no boundaries.
The laments for a death are over while death
Is warm and safe and drifts into sleep
In a child's dream.

Some time back I had stumbled
On the decomposing bodies of a young couple
On the hill slope behind the temple. The girl
Couldn't have been more than sixteen years old.
I had made a great effort to defend myself.
Her half-open eyes now wander through
My subdued Sunday mornings as though testing
The courage it took to be a man.

No wind. No storm.
Just the vague light of daybreak
Coming down from the hilltops.
An unknown darkening is in my breath.
And I knew death is born to us in the same way
As when we cast our nets into the night
And draw in the shapes of day.

—*Jayanta Mahapatra*

Since the start of the industrial revolution, humans have burned enough coal, oil, and natural gas to produce some two hundred and fifty billion metric tons of carbon. The result, as is well known, has been a transformation of the earth's atmosphere. The concentration of CO_2 in the air today—three hundred and eighty parts per million—is higher than it has been at any point in the past six hundred and fifty thousand years, and probably much longer. At the current rate of emissions growth, CO_2 concentration will top five hundred parts per million—roughly double pre-industrial levels—by the middle of this century. It is expected that such an increase will produce an eventual global temperature rise of between three and a half and seven degrees Fahrenheit, and that this, in turn, will prompt a string of disasters, including fiercer hurricanes, more deadly droughts, the disappearance of most remaining glaciers, the melting of the Arctic ice cap, and the inundation of many of the world's major coastal cities. But this is only half the story.

Ocean covers seventy per cent of the earth's surface, and everywhere that water and air come into contact there is an exchange. Gases from the atmosphere get absorbed by the ocean and gases dissolved in the water are released into the atmosphere. When the two are in equilibrium, roughly the same quantities are being dissolved as are getting released. But change the composition of the atmosphere, as we have done, and the exchange becomes lopsided: more CO_2 from the air enters the water than comes back out. In the nineteen-nineties, researchers from seven countries conducted nearly a hundred cruises, and collected more than seventy thousand seawater samples from different depths and locations. The analysis of these samples, which was completed in 2004, showed that nearly half of all the carbon dioxide that humans have emitted since the start of the nineteenth century has been absorbed by the sea.

When CO_2 dissolves, it produces carbonic acid, which has the chemical formula H_2CO_3. As acids go, H_2CO_3 is relatively innocuous—we drink it all the time in Coke and other carbonated beverages—but in sufficient quantities it can change the water's pH. Already, humans have pumped enough carbon into the oceans—some hundred and twenty billion tons—to produce a .1 decline in surface pH. Since pH, like the Richter scale, is a logarithmic measure, a .1 drop represents a rise in acidity of about thirty per cent. The process is generally referred to as "ocean acidification," though it might more accurately be described as a decline in ocean alkalinity. This year alone, the seas will absorb an additional two billion tons of carbon, and next year it is expected that they will absorb another two billion tons. Every day, every American, in effect, adds forty pounds of carbon dioxide to the oceans.

Because of the slow pace of deep-ocean circulation and the long life of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, it is impossible to reverse the acidification that has already taken place. Nor is it possible to prevent still more from occurring. Even if there were some way to halt the emission of CO_2 tomorrow, the oceans would continue to take up carbon until they reached a new equilibrium with the air. As Britain's Royal Society noted in a recent report, it will take "tens of thousands of years for ocean chemistry to return to a condition similar to that occurring at pre-industrial times."

Humans have, in this way, set in motion change on a geologic scale. The question that remains is how marine life will respond. Though oceanographers are just beginning to address the question, their discoveries, at this early stage, are disturbing. A few years ago, Fabry finally pulled her cloudy shells out of storage to examine them with a scanning electron microscope. She found that their surfaces were riddled with pits. In some cases, the pits had grown into gashes, and the upper layer had started to pull away, exposing the layer underneath.

The term "ocean acidification" was coined in 2003 by two climate scientists, Ken Caldeira and Michael Wickett, who were working at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, in Northern California. Caldeira has since moved to the Carnegie Institution, on the campus of Stanford University, and during the summer I went to visit him at his office, which is housed in a "green" building that looks like a barn that has been taken apart and reassembled at odd angles. The building has no air-conditioning; temperature control is provided by a shower of mist that rains down into a tiled chamber in the lobby. At the time of my visit, California was in the midst of a record-breaking heat wave; the system worked well enough that Caldeira's office, if not exactly cool, was at least moderately comfortable.

Caldeira is a trim man with wiry brown hair and a boyish sort of smile. In the nineteen-eighties, he worked as a software developer on Wall Street, and one of his clients was the New York Stock Exchange, for whom he designed computer programs to help detect insider trading. The programs functioned as they were supposed to, but after a while Caldeira came to the conclusion that the N.Y.S.E. wasn't actually interested in catching insider traders, and he decided to switch professions. He went back to school, at N.Y.U., and ended up becoming a climate modeller.

Unlike most modellers, who focus on one particular aspect of the climate system, Caldeira is, at any given moment, working on four or five disparate projects. He particularly likes computations of a provocative or surprising nature; for example, not long ago he calculated that cutting down all the world's forests and replacing them with grasslands would have a slight cooling effect. (Grasslands, which are lighter in color than forests, absorb less sunlight.) Other recent calculations that Caldeira has made show that to keep pace with the present rate of temperature change plants and animals would have to migrate poleward by thirty feet a day, and that a molecule of CO_2 generated by burning fossil fuels will, in the course of its lifetime in the atmosphere, trap a hundred thousand times more heat than was released in producing it.

Caldeira began to model the effects of carbon dioxide on the oceans in 1999, when he did some work for the Department of Energy. The department wanted to know what the environmental consequences would be of capturing CO_2 from smokestacks and injecting it deep into the sea. Caldeira set about calculating how the ocean's pH would change as a result of deep-sea injection, and then compared that result with the current practice of pouring carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and allowing it to be taken up by surface waters. In 2003, he submitted his work to *Nature*. The journal's editors advised him to drop the discussion of deep-ocean injection, he recalled, because the calculations concerning the effects of ordinary atmospheric release were so startling. Caldeira published the first part of his paper under the subheading "The coming centuries may see more ocean acidification than the past 300 million years."

Caldeira told me that he had chosen the term "ocean acidification" quite deliberately, for its shock value. Seawater is naturally alkaline, with a pH ranging from 7.8 to 8.5—a pH of 7 is neutral—which means that, for now, at least, the oceans are still a long way from actually turning acidic. Meanwhile, from the perspective of marine life, the drop in pH matters less than the string of chemical reactions that follow.

The main building block of shells is calcium carbonate—$CaCO_3$. (The White Cliffs of Dover are a huge $CaCO_3$ deposit, the remains of countless tiny sea creatures that piled up during the Cretaceous—or "chalky"—period.) Calcium carbonate produced by marine organisms comes in two principal forms, aragonite and calcite, which have slightly different crystal structures. How, exactly, different organisms form calcium carbonate remains something of a mystery. Ordinarily in seawater, $CaCO_3$ does not precipitate out as a solid. To build their shells, calcifying organisms must, in effect, assemble it. Adding carbonic acid to the water complicates their efforts, because it reduces the number of carbonate ions in circulation. In scientific terms, this is referred to as "lowering the water's saturation state with respect to calcium carbonate." Practically, it means shrinking the supply of material available for shell formation. (Imagine trying to build a house when someone keeps stealing your bricks.) Once the carbonate concentration gets pushed low enough, even existing shells, like those of Fabry's pteropods, begin to dissolve.

To illustrate, in mathematical terms, what the seas of the future will look like, Caldeira pulled out a set of graphs. Plotted on one axis was aragonite saturation levels; on the other, latitude. (Ocean latitude is significant because saturation levels tend naturally to decline toward the poles.) Different colors of lines represented different emissions scenarios. Some scenarios project that the world's economy will continue to grow rapidly and that this growth will be fuelled mostly by oil and coal. Others assume that the economy will grow more slowly,

"I've been researching a little furniture company I'd like to rearrange."

• •

and still others that the energy mix will shift away from fossil fuels. Caldeira considered four much studied scenarios, ranging from one of the most optimistic, known by the shorthand B1, to one of the most pessimistic, A2. The original point of the graphs was to show that each scenario would produce a different ocean. But they turned out to be more similar than Caldeira had expected.

Under all four scenarios, by the end of this century the waters around Antarctica will become undersaturated with respect to aragonite—the form of calcium carbonate produced by pteropods and corals. (When water becomes undersaturated, it is corrosive to shells.) Meanwhile, surface pH will drop by another .2, bringing acidity to roughly double what it was in pre-industrial times. To look still further out into the future, Caldeira modelled what would happen if humans burned through all the world's remaining fossil-fuel resources, a process that would release some eighteen thousand gigatons of carbon dioxide. He found that by 2300 the oceans would become undersaturated from the poles to the equator. Then he modelled what would happen if we pushed still further and burned through unconventional fuels, like low-grade shales. In that case, we would drive the pH down so low that the seas would come very close to being acidic.

"I used to think of B1 as a good scenario, and I used to think of A2 as a terrible scenario," Caldeira told me. "Now I look at them as different flavors of bad scenarios."

He went on, "I think there's a whole category of organisms that have been around for hundreds of millions of years which are at risk of extinction—namely, things that build calcium-carbonate shells or skeletons. To a first approximation, if we cut our emissions in half it will take us twice as long to create the damage. But we'll get to more or less the same place. We really need an order-of-magnitude reduction in order to avoid it."

Caldeira said that he had recently gone to Washington to brief some members of Congress. "I was asked, 'What is the appropriate stabilization target for atmospheric CO_2?' " he recalled. "And I said, 'Well, I think it's inappropriate to think in terms of stabilization targets. I think we should think in terms of emissions targets.' And they said, 'O.K., what's the appropriate emissions target?' And I said, 'Zero.'

"If you're talking about mugging little old ladies, you don't say, 'What's our target for the rate of mugging little old ladies?' You say, 'Mugging little old ladies is bad, and we're going to try to eliminate it.' You recognize you might not be a hundred per cent successful, but your goal is to eliminate the mugging of little old ladies. And I think we need to eventually come around to looking at carbon-dioxide emissions the same way."

Coral reefs grow in a great swath that stretches like a belt around the belly of the earth, from thirty degrees north to thirty degrees south latitude. The world's largest reef is the Great Barrier, off the coast of northeastern Australia, and the second largest is off the coast of Belize. There are extensive coral reefs in the tropical Pacific, in the Indian Ocean, and in the Red Sea, and many smaller ones in the Caribbean. These reefs, home to an estimated twenty-five per cent of all marine fish species, represent some of the most diverse ecosystems on the planet.

Much of what is known about coral reefs and ocean acidification was originally discovered, improbably enough, in Arizona, in the self-enclosed, supposedly self-sufficient world known as Biosphere 2. A three-acre glassed-in structure shaped like a ziggurat, Biosphere 2 was built in the late nineteen-eighties by a private group—a majority of the funding came from the billionaire Edward Bass—and was intended to demonstrate how life on earth (Biosphere 1) could be re-created on, say, Mars. The building contained an artificial "ocean," a "rain forest," a "desert," and an "agricultural zone." The first group of Biosphereans—four men and four women—managed to remain, sealed inside, for two years. They produced all their own food and, for a long stretch, breathed only recycled air, but the project was widely considered a failure. The Biosphereans spent much of the time hungry, and, even more ominously, they lost control of their artificial atmosphere. In the various "ecosystems," decomposition, which takes up oxygen and gives off CO_2, was supposed to be balanced by photosynthesis, which does the reverse. But, for reasons mainly having to do with the richness of the soil that had been used in the "agricultural zone," decomposition won out. Oxygen levels inside the building kept falling, and the Biosphereans developed what amounted

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y forearm and seemed barely
heir knobby, purplish heads.
’s corals were attached to tiles
the bottom of long, sinklike
re were hundreds of them,
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orn coral that grows in a clas-
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lumpy, putty-colored protu-
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hen Langdon put his hand in
faucet to stop the flow, I
at every lobe of *Porites divar-*
ered with tiny pink arms and
rm ended in soft, fingerlike
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a frenzy either of joy or of
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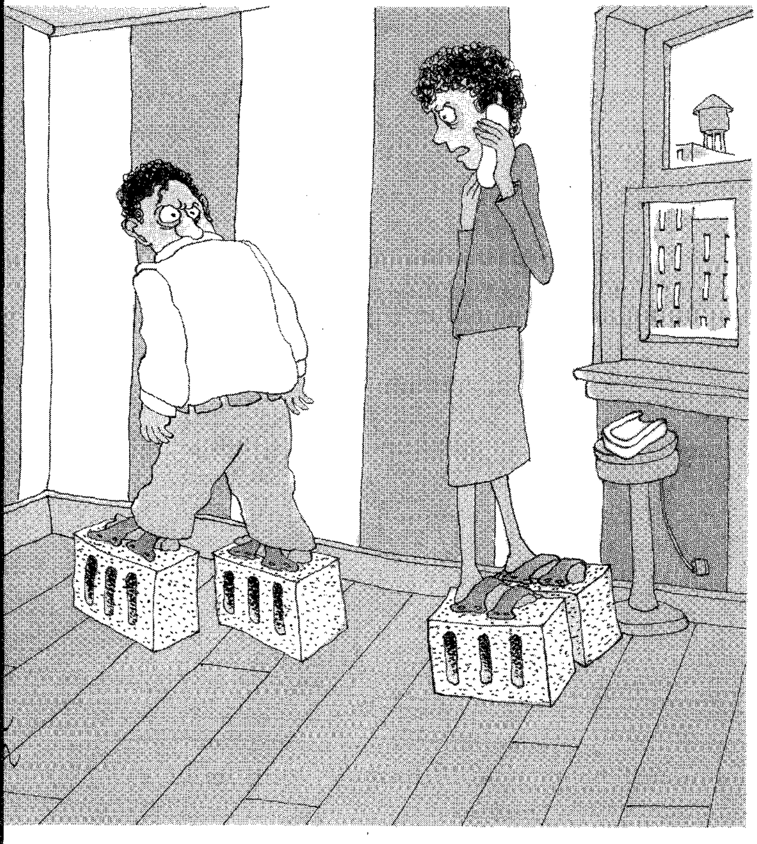
a dead calcareous skeleton.
polyp is a distinct individual,
tentacles and its own diges-
nd houses its own collection
algae, known as zooxanthel-
ovide it with most of its nutrition. At the same time, each polyp is joined to its neighbors through a thin layer of connecting tissue, and all are attached to the colony’s collective skeleton. Individual polyps constantly add to the group skeleton by combining calcium and carbonate ions in a medium known as the extracytoplasmic calcifying fluid. Meanwhile, other organisms, like parrot fish and sponges, are constantly eating away at the reef in search of food or protection. If a reef were ever to stop calcifying, it would start to shrink and eventually would disappear.

“It’s just like a tree with bugs,” Langdon explained. “It needs to grow pretty quickly just to stay even.”

As Langdon struggled, unsuccessfully, to control the pH in the Biosphere “ocean,” he started to wonder whether the corals in the tank might be to blame. The Biosphereans had raised twenty different species of coral, and while many of the other creatures, including nearly all the vertebrates selected for the project, had died out, the corals had survived. Langdon wondered whether the chemicals he was adding to raise the pH were, by increasing the saturation state, stimulating their growth. At the time, it



s the people downstairs complaining about noise again.”

seemed an unlikely hypothesis, because the prevailing view among marine biologists was that corals weren't sensitive to changes in saturation. (In many textbooks, the formula for coral calcification is still given incorrectly, which helps explain the prevalence of this view.) Just about everyone, including Langdon's own postdoc, a young woman named Francesca Marubini, thought that his theory was wrong. "It was a total pain in the ass," Langdon recalled.

To test his hypothesis, Langdon employed a straightforward but time-consuming procedure. Conditions in the "ocean" would be systematically varied, and the growth of the coral monitored. The experiment took more than three years to complete, produced more than a thousand measurements, and, in the end, confirmed Langdon's hypothesis. It revealed a more or less linear relationship between how fast the coral grew and how highly saturated the water was. By proving that increased saturation spurs coral growth, Langdon also, of course, demonstrated the reverse: when saturation drops, coral growth slows. In the artificial world of Biosphere 2, the implications of this discovery were interesting; in the real world they were rather more grim. Any drop in the ocean's saturation levels, it seemed, would make coral more vulnerable.

Langdon and Marubini published their findings in the journal *Global Biogeochemical Cycles* in the summer of 2000. Still, many marine biologists remained skeptical, in no small part, it seems, because of the study's association with the discredited Biosphere project. In 2001, Langdon sold his house in New York and moved to Arizona. He spent another two years redoing the experiments, with even stricter controls. The results were essentially identical. In the meantime, other researchers launched similar experiments on different coral species. Their findings were also the same, which, as Langdon put it to me, "is the best way to make believers out of people."

Coral reefs are under threat for a host of reasons: bottom trawling, dynamite fishing, coastal erosion, agricultural runoff, and, nowadays, global warming. When water temperatures rise too high, corals lose—or perhaps expel, no one is quite sure—the algae that nourish them. (The process is called "bleaching," because without their zooxanthellae corals appear white.) For a particular reef, any one of these threats could potentially be fatal. Ocean acidification poses a different kind of threat, one that could preclude the very possibility of a reef.

Saturation levels are determined using a complicated formula that involves multiplying the calcium and carbonate ion concentrations, and then dividing the result by a figure called the stoichiometric solubility product. Prior to the industrial revolution, the world's major reefs were all growing in water whose aragonite saturation level stood between 4 and 5. Today, there is not a single remaining region in the oceans where the saturation level is above 4.5, and there are only a handful of spots—off the northeastern coast of Australia, in the Philippine Sea, and near the Maldives—where it is above 4. Since the takeup of CO_2 by the oceans is a highly predictable physical process, it is possible to map the saturation levels of the future with great precision. Assuming that current emissions trends continue, by 2060 there will be no regions left with a level above 3.5. By 2100, none will remain above 3.

As saturation levels decline, the rate at which reefs add aragonite through calcification and the rate at which they lose it through bioerosion will start to approach each other. At a certain point, the two will cross, and reefs will begin to disappear. Precisely where that point lies is difficult to say, because erosion may well accelerate as ocean pH declines. Langdon estimates that the crossing point will be reached when atmospheric CO_2 levels exceed six hundred and fifty parts per million, which, under a "business as usual" emissions scenario, will occur sometime around 2075.

"I think that this is just an absolute limit, something they can't cope with," he told me. Other researchers put the limit somewhat higher, and others somewhat lower.

Meanwhile, as global temperatures climb, bleaching events are likely to become more common. A major worldwide bleaching event occurred in 1998, and many Caribbean reefs suffered from bleaching again during the summer of 2005. Current conditions in the equatorial Pacific suggest that 2007 is apt to be another bleaching year. Taken together, acidification and rising ocean temperatures represent a kind of double bind for reefs: regions that remain hospitable in terms of temperature are becoming increasingly inhospitable in terms of saturation, and vice versa.

"While one, bleaching, is an acute stress that's killing them off, the other, acidification, is a chronic stress that's preventing them from recovering," Joanie Kleypas, a reef scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, in Boulder, Colorado, told me. Kleypas said she thought that some corals would be able to migrate to higher latitudes as the oceans warm, but that, because of the lower saturation levels, as well as the difference in light regimes, the size of these migrants would be severely limited. "There's a point where you're going to have coral but no reefs," she said.

The tropical oceans are, as a rule, nutrient-poor; they are sometimes called liquid deserts. Reefs are so dense with life that they are often compared to rain forests. This rain-forest-in-the-desert effect is believed to be a function of a highly efficient recycling system, through which nutrients are, in effect, passed from one reef-dwelling organism to another. It is estimated that at least a million, and perhaps as many as nine million, distinct species live on or near reefs.

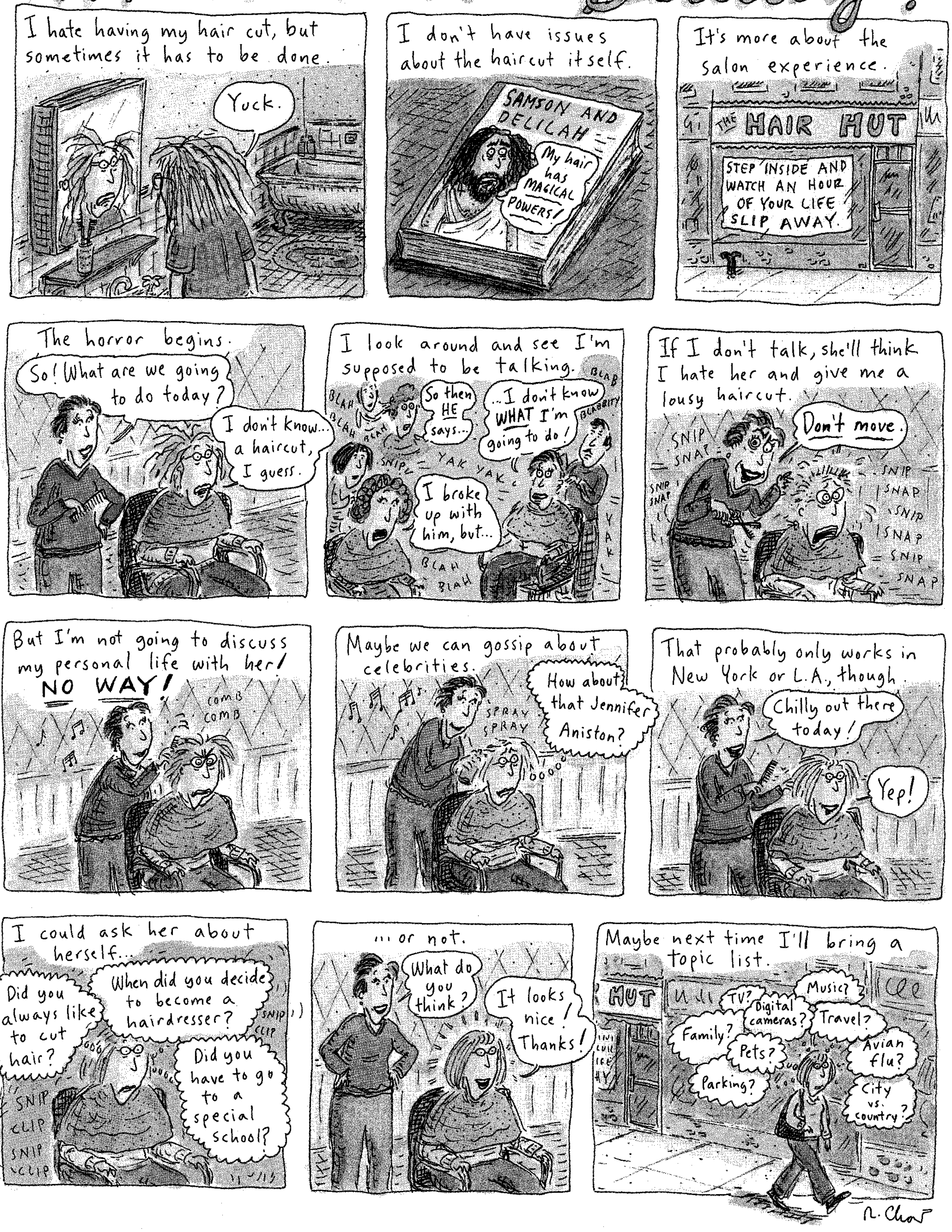
"Being conservative, let's say it's a million species that live in and around coral," Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, an expert on coral reefs at the University of Queensland, in Australia, told me. "Some of these species that hang around coral reefs can sometimes be found living without coral. But most species are completely dependent on coral—they literally live in, eat, and breed around coral. And, when we see coral get destroyed during bleaching events, those species disappear. The key question is how vulnerable all these various species are. That's a very important question, but at the moment you'd have to say that a million different species are under threat."

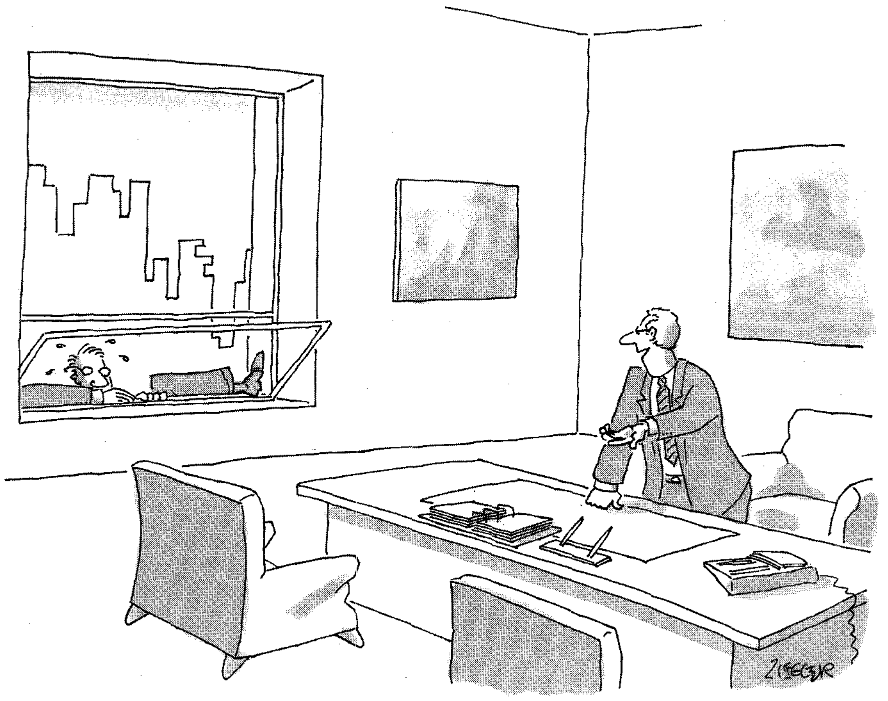
He went on, "This is a matter of the utmost importance. I can't really stress it in words strong enough. It's a do-or-die situation."

Around the same time that Langdon was performing his coral experiments at the Biosphere, a German marine biologist named Ulf Riebesell decided to look into the behavior of a class

SKETCHBOOK BY ROZ CHAST

What Price Beauty!


I hate having my hair cut, but sometimes it has to be done.
Yuck.
I don't have issues about the haircut itself.
SAMSON AND DELILAH
My hair has MAGICAL POWERS!
It's more about the salon experience.
THE HAIR HUT
STEP INSIDE AND WATCH AN HOUR OF YOUR LIFE SLIP AWAY.
The horror begins.
So! What are we going to do today?
I don't know... a haircut, I guess.
I look around and see I'm supposed to be talking.
BLAH BLAH BLAH
So then HE says...
...I don't know WHAT I'm going to do!
BLAB BLABBITY
SNIP
YAK YAK
I broke up with him, but...
BLAH BLAH
YAK
If I don't talk, she'll think I hate her and give me a lousy haircut.
Don't move.
SNIP SNAP SNIP SNAP SNIP SNAP SNIP SNAP SNIP SNAP
But I'm not going to discuss my personal life with her! NO WAY!
COMB COMB
Maybe we can gossip about celebrities.
SPRAY SPRAY
How about that Jennifer Aniston?
Ooooo
That probably only works in New York or L.A., though.
Chilly out there today!
Yep!
I could ask her about herself...
Did you always like to cut hair?
When did you decide to become a hairdresser?
Did you have to go to a special school?
SNIP CLIP SNIP CLIP SNIP CLIP
...or not.
What do you think?
It looks nice! Thanks!
Maybe next time I'll bring a topic list.
HUT
TV? Digital cameras? Music? Family? Travel? Pets? Avian flu? Parking? City vs. country?
R. Chast



"I don't see you pencilled in on my calendar, Armstrong. But, as long as you're up here, come on in and have a seat."

of phytoplankton known as coccolithophores. Coccolithophores build plates of calcite—coccoliths—that they arrange around themselves, like armor, in structures known as coccospheres. (Viewed under an electron microscope, they look like balls that have been covered with buttons.) Coccolithophores are very tiny—only a few microns in diameter—and also very common. One of the species that Riebesell studied, *Emiliani huxleyi*, produces blooms that can cover forty thousand square miles, turning vast sections of the ocean an eerie, milky blue.

In his experiments, Riebesell bubbled CO_2 into tanks of coccolithophores to mimic the effects of rising atmospheric concentrations. Both of the species he was studying—*Emiliani huxleyi* and *Gephyrocapsa oceanica*—showed a clear response to the variations. As CO_2 levels rose, not only did the organisms' rate of calcification slow; they also started to produce deformed coccoliths and ill-shaped coccospheres.

"To me, it says that we will have massive changes," Riebesell, who works at the Leibniz Institute of Marine Sciences, in Kiel, told me. "If a whole group of calcifiers drops out, are there other organisms taking their place? What is the rate of evolution to fill those spaces? That's awfully difficult to address in experimental work. These organisms have never, ever seen this in their entire evolutionary history. And if they've never seen it they probably will find it difficult to deal with."

Calcifying organisms come in a fantastic array of shapes, sizes, and taxonomic groups. Echinoderms like starfish are calcifiers. So are mollusks like clams and oysters, and crustaceans like barnacles, and many species of bryozoans, or sea mats, and tiny protists known as foraminifera—the list goes on and on. Without experimental data, it's impossible to know which species will prove to be particularly vulnerable to declining pH and which will not. In the natural world, the pH of the water changes by season, and even time of day, and many species may be able to adapt to new conditions, at least within certain bounds. Obviously, though, it's impractical to run experiments on tens of thousands of different species. (Only a few dozen have been tested so far.) Meanwhile, as the example of coral reefs makes clear, what's more important than how acidification will affect any particular organism is how it will affect entire marine ecosystems—a question that can't be answered by even the most ambitious experimental protocol. The recent report on acidification by Britain's Royal Society noted that it was "not possible to predict" how whole communities would respond, but went on to observe that "without significant action to reduce CO_2 emissions" there may be "no place in the future oceans for many of the species and ecosystems we know today."

Carol Turley is a senior scientist at Plymouth Marine Laboratory, in Plymouth, England, and one of the authors of the Royal Society report. She observed that pH is a critical variable not just in calcification but in other vital marine processes, like the cycling of nutrients.

"It looks like we'll be changing lots of levels in the food chain," Turley told me. "So we may be affecting the primary producers. We may be affecting larvae of zooplankton and so on. What I think might happen, and it's pure speculation, is that you may get a shortening of the food chain so that only one or two species comes out on top—for instance, we may see massive blooms of jellyfish and things like that, and that's a very short food chain."

Thomas Lovejoy, who coined the term "biological diversity" in 1980, compared the effects of ocean acidification to "running the course of evolution in reverse."

"For an organism that lives on land, the two most important factors are temperature and moisture," Lovejoy, who is now the president of the Heinz Center for Science, Economics, and the Environment, in Washington, D.C., told me. "And for an organism that lives in the water the two most important factors are temperature and acidity. So this is just a profound, profound change. It is going to send all kinds of ripples through marine ecosystems, because of the importance of calcium carbonate for so many organisms in the oceans, including those at the base of the food chain. If you back off and look at it, it's as if you or I went to our annual physical and the body chemistry came back and the doctor looked really, really worried. It's a systemic change. You could have food chains collapse, and fisheries ultimately with them, because most of the fish we get from the ocean are at the end of long food chains. You probably will see shifts in favor of invertebrates, or the reign of jellyfish."

Riebesell put it this way: "The risk is that at the end we will have the rise of slime."

Paleooceanographers study the oceans of the geologic past. For the most part, they rely on sediments pulled up from the bottom of the sea, which contain what might be thought of as a vast library written in code. By analyzing the oxygen isotopes of ancient shells, paleooceanographers can, for example, infer the temperature of the oceans going back at least a hundred million years, and also determine how much—or how little—of the planet was covered by ice. By analyzing mineral grains and deposits of "microfossils," they can map archaic currents and wind patterns, and by examining the remains of foraminifera they can re-create the history of ocean pH.

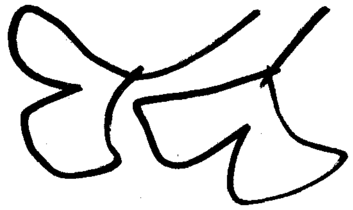
In September, two dozen paleooceanographers met with a roughly equal number of marine biologists at a conference hosted by Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. The point of the conference, which was titled "Ocean Acidification—Modern Observations and Past Experiences," was to use the methods of paleooceanography to look into the future. (The ocean-acidification community is still a relatively small one, and at the conference I ran into half the people I had spoken to about the subject, including Victoria Fabry, Ken Caldeira, and Chris Langdon.) Most of the meeting's first day was devoted to a discussion of an ecological crisis known as the Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum, or P.E.T.M.

The P.E.T.M. took place fifty-five million years ago, at the border marking the end of the Paleocene epoch and the beginning of the Eocene, when there was a sudden, enormous release of carbon into the atmosphere. After the release, temperatures around the world soared; the Arctic, for instance, warmed by ten degrees Fahrenheit, and Antarctica became temperate. Presumably because of this, vertebrate evolution veered off in a new direction. Many of the so-called archaic mammals became extinct, and were replaced by entirely new orders: the ancestors of today's deer, horses, and primates all appeared right around the time of the P.E.T.M. The members of these new orders were curiously undersized—the earliest horse was no bigger than a poodle—a function, it is believed, of hot, dry conditions that favored smallness.

In the oceans, temperatures rose dramatically and, because of all the carbon, the water became increasingly acidic. Marine sediments show that many calcifying organisms vanished—more than fifty species of foraminifera, for example, died out—while others that were once rare became dominant. On the seafloor, the usual buildup of empty shells from dead calcifiers ceased. In ocean cores, the P.E.T.M. shows up vividly as a band of reddish clay sandwiched between thick layers of calcium carbonate.

No one is sure exactly where the carbon of the P.E.T.M. came from or what triggered its release. (Deposits of natural gas known as methane hydrates, which sit, frozen, underneath the ocean floor, are one possible source.) In all, the release amounted to about two trillion metric tons, or eight times as much carbon as humans have added to the atmosphere since industrialization began. This is obviously a significant difference in scale, but the consensus at the conference was that if there was any disparity between then and now it was that the impact of the P.E.T.M. was not drastic enough.

The seas have a built-in buffering capacity: if the water's pH starts to drop, shells and shell fragments that have been deposited on the ocean floor begin to dissolve, pushing the pH back up again. This buffering mechanism is highly effective, provided that acidification takes place on the same timescale as deep-ocean circulation. (One complete exchange of surface and bottom water takes thousands of years.) Paleooceanographers estimate that the release of carbon during the P.E.T.M. took between one and ten thousand years—the record is not detailed enough to be more exact—and thus occurred too rapidly to be completely buffered. Currently, CO_2 is being released into the air at least three times and perhaps as much as thirty times as quickly as during the P.E.T.M. This is so fast that buffering by ocean sediments is not even a factor.



"In our case, the surface layer is bearing all the burden," James Zachos, a paleooceanographer at the University of California at Santa Cruz, told me. "If anything, you can look at the P.E.T.M. as a best-case scenario." Ken Caldeira said that he thought a better analogy for the future would be the so-called K-T, or Cretaceous-Tertiary, boundary event, which occurred sixty-five million years ago, when an asteroid six miles wide hit the earth. In addition to dust storms, fires, and tidal waves, the impact is believed to have generated huge quantities of sulfuric acid.

"The K-T boundary event was more extreme but shorter-lived than what we could do in the coming centuries," Caldeira said. "But by the time we've burned conventional fossil-fuel resources what we've done will be comparable in extremeness, except that it will last millennia instead of years." More than a third of all marine genera disappeared at the K-T boundary. Half of all coral species became extinct, and it took the other half more than two million years to recover.

Ultimately, the seas will absorb most of the CO_2 that humans emit. (Over the very long term, the figure will approach ninety per cent.) From a certain vantage point, this is a lucky break. Were the oceans not providing a vast carbon sink, almost all of the CO_2 that humans have emitted would still be in the air. Atmospheric concentrations would now be nearing five hundred parts per million, and the disasters predicted for the end of the century would already be upon us. That there is still a chance to do something to avert the worst consequences of global warming is thanks largely to the oceans.

But this sort of accounting may be misleading. As the process of ocean acidification demonstrates, life on land and life in the seas can affect each other in unexpected ways. Actions that might appear utterly unrelated—say, driving a car down the New Jersey Turnpike and secreting a shell in the South Pacific—turn out to be connected. To alter the chemistry of the seas is to take a very large risk, and not just with the oceans. ♦

FICTION

NIGHT TRAIN TO FRANKFURT

BY MARISA SILVER

They were going to boil Dorothy's blood. Take it out, heat it, put it back in. The cancer would be gone. Well, that wasn't exactly it. The treatment had a more formal-sounding name, thermo-somethingorother, a word that was both trustworthy (because you recognized the prefix) and lofty, so that you didn't really question it, knew you were too thick to really understand whatever explanation might be given you. "They're going to boil my blood" is what it came down to, and this was what Dorothy had told her daughter, Helen, when she called her from New York. There were statistics, affidavits. There was a four-color brochure from the clinic in Frankfurt, Germany, printed in three languages. As they waited for the train in the Munich station, Helen studied the pamphlet's fonts and graphics. A frequent dupe of advertising herself—how many depilatories and night creams had she bought over the years, and at what expense?—Helen understood the significance behind the choice of peaceful, healing blue over charged, emotional red, the softening elegance of the italicized quotes from Adèle de Chavigny, a woman from Strasbourg who had not only survived having her blood boiled but had gone on to live a life of graceful transcendence. There were no concrete images of the clinic itself, no pictures of whatever this boiling machine might look like. Helen imagined huge vats like those in a brewery—wide, clear tubes with viscous, viral blood moving sluggishly in one direction, while bright, animated, healthy blood rushed eagerly back toward the patient. On the roof of the brewery, she imagined enormous chimneys expelling the sweet-sour-smelling residue of defeated disease into the air. *Poof, poof,* the smokestacks would go, and all the German townsfolk (yes, in her fantasy they were wearing lederhosen and small peaked caps) would look up, proud to know that, in their town, death had been conquered.

"Fairy stories," Dorothy would have said dismissively, had Helen shared such an idea with her, as she had so often as a child, forever irritating Dorothy with her impractical mind. Helen had been careful not to lob Dorothy's criticism back at her when she'd announced this latest and most ridiculous plan to save her life. But Dorothy's response to her own illness had been perversely uncharacteristic from the start.

Most important, Helen realized, fingering the brochure again once they were on the train, their bags stowed away in the racks above them, the pamphlet showed no images of the sick—a choice made, Helen was sure, to deëmphasize the questionable science behind the treatment. It would be impossible to look at a photograph of someone as ill as, say, her fifty-seven-year-old mother and think that this faintly medieval idea, one that brought to mind leeches and exorcisms, could succeed where modern medicine had failed, or, in Dorothy's case, where modern medicine had never been given the chance to go. The brochure talked about "renewal" and "refreshment," and read more like a promotion for an overly expensive spa, of the kind that Helen had read about in fashion and travel magazines.

She let the brochure fall to her lap. Her mother was sleeping, lying on her side across the opposite three seats, her knees pulled up to her chest, her child-sized feet peeking out from beneath her maroon down coat. It had been a good idea to splurge on the whole compartment, despite Dorothy's protests about useless expenditure (they had taken the train at Dorothy's insistence, in order to save money) and her usual vague, disapproving intimations that Helen's "new" life in California, the one she had been living for ten years now—ever since she'd left the conservatory at twenty-two—was somehow profligate. It did Helen no good to explain that her motley collection of jobs—as a low-level administrative staffer and occasional page-turner for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, a piano teacher to private-school children, and a pianist on the High Holy Days at Temple Beth Hillel—netted barely enough to cover her expenses in the folly of an apartment she'd rented in the Hollywood Hills, which could be accessed only by an elevator tower or by a strenuous hike up a dirt-and-scrub path, and which had been featured in a famous movie from the seventies that she could never remember the name of, even when people reminded her of it over and over, exclaiming at her proximity to history as though she were living in a house once occupied by George Washington. The very fact that Helen drove a car, albeit a ten-year-old Nissan, was proof enough to Dorothy that she had embraced an ideological lack of frugality. The few times that Dorothy had allowed Helen to fly her to Los Angeles, Helen had found herself obscuring things from her mother, like the fact that she had, on a whim, reupholstered her living-room couch, although the original material was fine, and certainly not as threadbare as her mother's valiant collection of chairs and couches, which stood in her New York apartment like the stoic survivors of some kind of rending disaster. Of course, as a child and even as a teen-ager, Helen had never noticed the fraying tablecloths or chipped china, had been comforted by the absolute predictability of her home, by the way "The Painted Bird" continued to occupy exactly the same place on the bookshelf as it had when she'd first discovered it, at age eleven, and stared, troubled and thrilled, at the grotesque and vaguely sexual cover art. A button placed in an ashtray when she was seven was sure to be there still when she was eight, nine, ten, adapted to its new habitat, and the ashtray itself adapted to its inhabitant, so that it was now "the place where the red button is" rather than anything useful for smokers. It was only as an adult, returning for visits, that she began to feel quietly dismayed by her mother's thrift, as if it indicated something disturbing. Was Dorothy refusing the future? Was this the reason, too, that she had forsworn conventional treatment for her disease? Did she mean to die?

Helen looked around the compartment. She had been right to reserve the entire thing without telling her mother. A first-class sleeper would have been too risky; her mother might not have even boarded the train. Helen had hoped that Dorothy, upon entering the second-class accommodations and finding no other passengers there, would simply assume that they were the recipients of a bit of good luck. But, of course, Dorothy figured things out the minute Helen closed the door behind them. The only reason she consented to this act of economic irresponsibility was that she was too ill to fight back.

The flight from New York had been exhausting. As the hours across the ocean wore on, five-foot-one Dorothy had sunk farther and farther into her seat, until she resembled a child whose feet

JELENA VUKOTIC, "SLAVICA" (2006)

waggled impatiently above the broken-crayon-and-mini-pretzel-strewn floor. Helen had noticed the flight attendants casting worried glances at her mother whenever they passed, and she knew that they were quietly wondering if they were going to have a corpse on their hands before they reached Munich. She imagined that there was a protocol for this kind of emergency: surely they would remove the dead body from the sight of the other passengers—perhaps lay her mother on the floor of the galley at the back of the plane, cover her with some of those too thin blankets, or roll her into one of those ingenious storage places airplanes specialized in.

But what was the protocol for taking your mother to have her blood boiled?

In the low light of the train compartment, Dorothy's face shone. She had grown so thin lately; her skin stretched tautly over her nose and her cheekbones like a sheet on a well-made bed. In the last few months, Helen had become intimate with her mother in a way that made them both uncomfortable. During her increasingly frequent visits to New York, she had bathed Dorothy, helped her to sit on the toilet, pared her thick, yellowing toenails, then stroked them with the bright-red discount-store polish that Dorothy had been faithful to all these years. This breaking down of the customary distance that had existed between mother and daughter for decades made it more and more difficult for Helen now to view her mother as a living thing rather than as a collection of body parts and functions. But perhaps that was a necessary by-product of giving care; Helen knew that if she allowed herself to look at the larger picture of her mother's demise she would be overwhelmed by thoughts of needs, both met and not, and that she risked succumbing to a childlike terror of being left alone.

When called on to be a page-turner at the Philharmonic, Helen found that if she concentrated on one note, and then the next, instead of letting her mind take in the whole sweep of the piece, she never failed to turn the page at the right time. It was only when she lost sight of the specifics, when she let her mind range backward and forward across the music like a low-flying bird, that she made a mistake. She'd begin by thinking about the music—what choices she might make in the speed of a diminuendo or the attack on a coda—and then, inevitably, she'd get trapped in an eddy of memory about the moment, or series of moments, that had led to her decision to leave the conservatory, to walk away from the possibility, no matter how far-fetched, of being the person who was now seated at the piano so close to her that she could hear his or her breaths and grunts and soft guttural moans, as if she were standing at the open doorway to a bedroom while the pianist was making love. And then, with her mind hijacked by so many thoughts, she would be a beat too late or too early with the turn, and suffer the annoyed glance of the pianist, and carry the mistake with her for days.

When, a week earlier, Helen had told her nominal boyfriend, Nathan, about her mother's decision to go to Germany for the treatment, he had almost rolled his eyes. Helen had been grateful for his blunt skepticism, because it allowed her to take the opposite position with a kind of self-righteousness that she would not otherwise have been able to muster. She had proclaimed, if not a belief in, at least a tolerance for this latest of her mother's nonmedical solutions to "the cancer problem," as Dorothy referred to it—as if it were a tangled political issue that might be written about on the editorial page of her beloved New York *Times*, and then hotly discussed with the butcher or the man at the shoe-repair place when she went out each day on her brisk round of errands. "She's done her research," Helen told Nathan, who sat at the kitchen table of her hilltop apartment—he had moved in a year earlier, after two years of dating. "They've had good results."

Nathan did not respond, because he was not a foolish man. Six months had passed since Helen had discovered that he was having an affair, and their current détente was built on the understanding that he would never again be able to speak freely. A year before, Nathan would have thrown back statistics of his own; he was in immunology research at Children's Hospital, and had a dedicated disrespect for the alternative medical arts. Over the years, he had listened with slack-jawed disbelief when Helen had explained that her friends Wendy and Terry were postponing vaccinations for little Mandy and Timmo because of studies linking the shots to developmental delays. "Do you know how many kids die each year from whooping cough?" he had exclaimed in frustration. When Wendy had proudly told him that she'd cured Timmo's conjunctivitis by squeezing her own breast milk into his eye, Nathan had not been able to restrain himself. "Right from your tit?" he'd responded, as if Wendy had exposed Timmo to porn. Helen felt a momentary pleasure now as she watched Nathan swallow his criticism of her mother's new gambit; he was no longer sure of himself in their relationship.

She had taken him back because he had apologized, begged, cried, and apologized again. But, in the current atmosphere of their relationship, he had no idea what concessions to his character she would continue to make, and what could cause her to send him back down that ancient elevator tower while she tossed his clothing from her balcony to the street below, white button-down shirts and briefs falling at his feet like shot birds. Could he continue to organize the papers she left scattered across the table into neat piles set at right angles to one another? Could he continue to indulge his need to keep the refrigerator clear of any food that was even approaching its use-by date? Still, although she had gained the upper hand in the relationship, her sense of victory was overshadowed by the knowledge that she no longer really had a boyfriend, only a set of misgivings and recriminations decorated as a handsome enough, smart enough, bearded, bespectacled man with delicate hands, shiny from too much washing. The loneliness that had descended on her in the aftermath of the crisis was so palpable that Helen often thought of it as a person. It stood by her side as she washed the dishes, or helped Marina Delgado, her best and most dedicated student, struggle through "The Well-Tempered Clavier" while she half listened, half watched the dust motes hanging in the air, lit by the afternoon light coming through the louvred windows of her apartment. The loneliness followed her, judged her, pointed out which of *her* irritating habits had finally driven Nathan to do what he had done.

She was not sure why she hadn't kicked him out in the end, except that she had begun to look forward to the outsized emotions of his entreaties, the late-night talks, the tears. She knew that the high drama was silly, but it reminded her of the kind of person she had once been—a girl who would weep when her rendition of a Beethoven adagio did not live up to the version that played in her imagination, a girl who would weep because perfection was too difficult a goal to aim for and too crushing to fall short of.

What Helen had really felt, after hearing Dorothy's description of the blood-heating regimen, was not skepticism but pity. But she would never have said this aloud, not only because she didn't want to give Nathan the satisfaction but because she knew that it was horrible to have such feelings toward her mother, whom she loved—if that was the right word for the mixture of frustration and gratitude and hatred and tolerance and surprising, intractable, illogical attachment she felt for Dorothy, who was as deeply and inescapably rooted inside Helen as her own fractured heart.

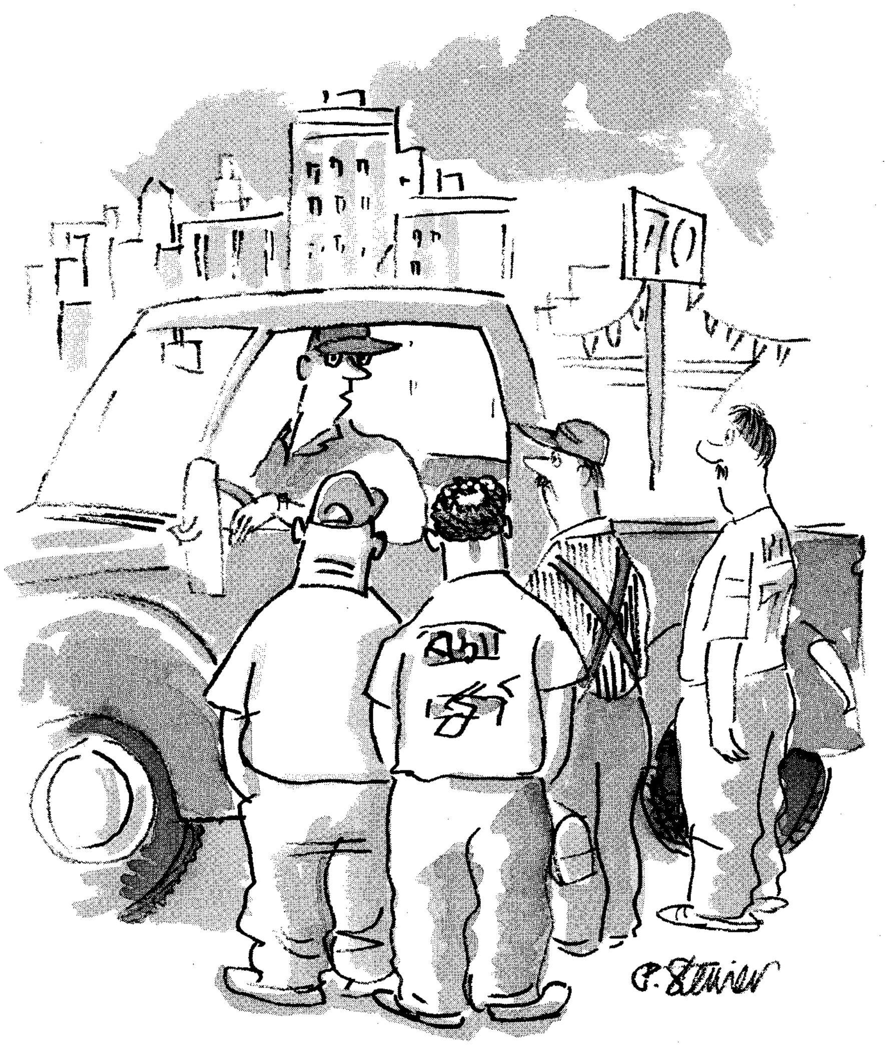
Dr. Halverson, Dorothy's purported oncologist and an old suitor from her City College days, had recently pronounced the disease so far gone that the risks of conventional treatment, if Dorothy were to change her mind, would be more deleterious than the risks of doing nothing.

"You mean my risk of dying is now no better than my risk of dying?" Dorothy replied.

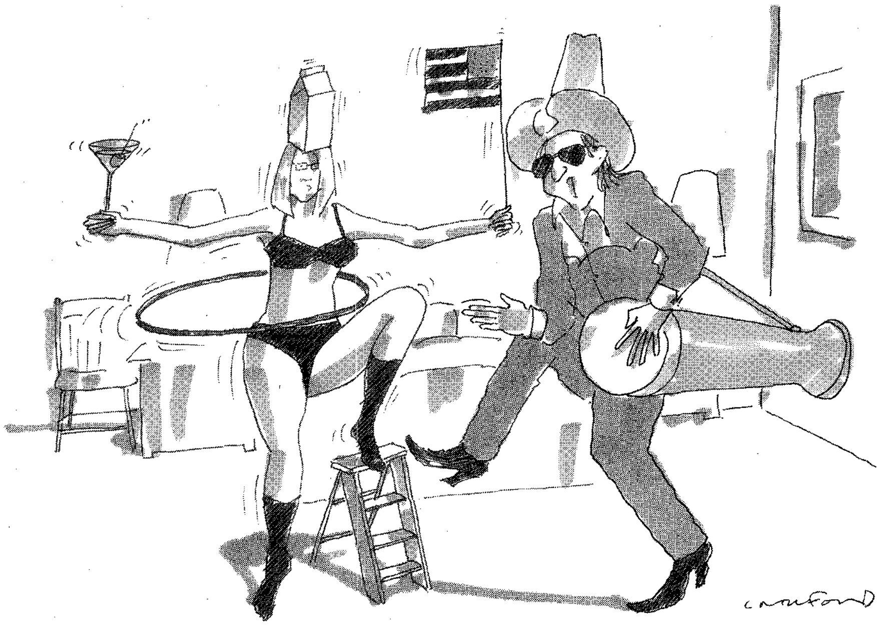
"Dodi," Dr. Halverson sighed, shaking his head at her lack of sentiment, an atavistic admiration dancing around his lips.

Helen had been in the examination room when he broke the news. She could not figure out why Dorothy continued to consult Dr. Halverson, or why he agreed to see her, despite her long-term resistance to his advice. What was the point of all those unfilled prescriptions for lab tests? Why did he continue to let her waste his time? Maybe he, like Helen, was so mystified by Dorothy's aberrant choice of the esoteric over science that he didn't quite believe it, and was waiting for Dorothy to finally break down, reclaim her lifelong set-jawed, unforgiving gaze on life, and start the do-si-do of chemo and radiation. Dorothy, this short, mouthy woman from Bayonne who had marched for women's rights and against Vietnam, hidden in the crowds while her homemade posters floated in the air above her as though held aloft by a ghost, had never once, in fifty-seven years, shown an interest in anything "alternative," or even philosophical. Helen had been six when her father died. She asked how long it took a person to climb to Heaven. Dorothy took Helen's face in her hands and said, "Not Heaven, honey. That's just a fairy tale." How frustrating it must have been for Dr. Halverson to watch Dorothy now, placing her faith in Dr. Hsia and his stinking herbs in Chinatown, or in Paul Romero and his needles in Park Slope, or in the water-therapy clinic in D.C. Helen admired the doctor's delicacy. He never belittled Dorothy's choices, and in these past months, when Dorothy had experienced her first truly frightening bouts of pain, he had visited the apartment as often as he could.

His patience stood in sharp contrast to Nathan's disparagement. "It's *her* body," Helen had said to Nathan, in defense of the Germany plan. The word "body" sank to the ground the minute she said it, weighted, as it was, with the idea of *his* body and his desires, which had managed so casually to reject hers. She felt suddenly conscious of her thighs wrapped tightly (too tightly?) in denim, her small breasts bolstered ineffectually by some newfangled underwire bra she'd bought online. She had never had smooth skin—had picked and squeezed it too much as a teen-ager, despite her mother's warnings. Was that it? Did Nathan's other woman have small pores? Nathan shrugged, smiled, then scrolled through five other expressions, trying to find the one that would cause him the least harm. Helen was humiliated all over again. That was the prob-



"I'm looking to hire a C.F.O. Anyone interested?"



"I promised myself I would never let this happen to me."

• •

lem with his transgression, she thought: he had taken so many words away from her. Besides "body," there was "candy" (the woman's ridiculous name), there was "desert" (one of the places they'd trysted), and whole sentences like "What are you thinking about?," which was as dangerous as stepping in front of a speeding car.

The train made a stop at a local station. It was dark outside, and shadowy figures wearing heavy overcoats against the midwinter cold moved on and off the platform. Dorothy's eyes opened. She stared across the compartment toward her daughter, but Helen could tell that Dorothy was not seeing, that she was suspended somewhere between her pill-induced sleep and a fuzzy semi-alertness. It made her feel weak to see her mother hovering helplessly in this state. As much as she hated to admit it, Helen counted on her mother's decisiveness, her unwillingness to wander around in the gray areas of emotion. When Helen, having finished with middling results in too many competitions, and having taken a good hard look at where she stood among her musical peers, made the decision to give up her dream of becoming a concert pianist, Dorothy had said, "That's sensible," as though she'd been waiting patiently for Helen to get the answer right for years. Helen suddenly felt the lie behind all those performances and recitals; she had thought her mother her ally, when in fact Dorothy had been tapping her foot the whole time, waiting for Helen to wise up.

Helen regarded her mother a moment longer. The blue of her eyes was rheumy, indistinct. Her mouth hung open in a way that Helen knew she would hate. A few strands of hair were stuck to her dry lips. Dorothy had imparted several important pieces of advice to Helen in her youth, one of which was "Don't hold your mouth open—it makes you look stupid." Helen was also to wear a bra even in bed, in a war against future droop, and never to hook her hair behind her ears if she didn't want them to stick out. Dorothy's advice was like that—warnings on how to avoid a dark, ugly inevitability. So, in reality, it wasn't advice at all, only an acknowledgment of Helen's ultimate inefficacy in the face of the Cards You've Been Dealt. Dorothy's teeth seemed yellower than Helen remembered. But everything about her seemed yellow now, like the pages of an old library book.

"God," Dorothy said, breathlessly, and, for a moment, Helen wondered if she was having a conversation with that Man she professed not to believe in. But Dorothy's eyes were focussed now. She had come to. "Where are we?"

"Nowhere," Helen said, looking out the window into the darkness. "We just passed a town. You should sleep some more, Mom. We have a ways to go." She regretted this suggestion. Her mother was cunning enough to know when she was not wanted.

"Whenever I sleep, I feel like I'm rehearsing for something," Dorothy said, attempting to sit up. Helen stood and helped Dorothy settle against the train seat. She smelled of the tuberose perfume she'd used her whole life, that and the turning odor of the body in decline. Helen wondered when this happened—at what point the body's smells could no longer be masked by deodorants or flowery soaps, at what point they would stop taking no for an answer.

"How do you feel?" Helen asked, sitting back down, across from her mother. She herself had barely recovered from the eight hours on the plane from New York. She felt clammy and bloated from having eaten too many meals in too short a time. She wanted to strip, have a bath, evacuate, start over again.

"I feel like shit, darling," Dorothy said.

"Are you hungry?" Helen asked.

"No."

"You should eat." Helen looked into her purse. "I have a granola bar. And that turkey sandwich from the plane."

"*That* will kill me. What is it, ten hours old?"

"You'll need your strength." Helen held out the granola bar.

"Let's put away the platitude playbook, sweetheart," Dorothy said. "If there's one thing I know about lately, it's my dear, disastrous body. And if it eats right now it will upchuck all over this lovely compartment you've wasted your money on."

Helen studied the pattern of veins webbed across her mother's cheeks. She thought about La Brea Woman. A model of the dwarfish prehistoric woman was posed in a glass case at a museum on Wilshire. She appeared clad in an animal pelt, her long black hair modestly covering her naked plaster breasts. But, then, through a trick of light and mirrors, her outfit, as well as her skin, fell away, so that you could see her knobby skeleton. Helen had visited the museum when she first moved to Los Angeles, thrilled by the city's oddities in the way, she now knew, so many new immigrants were—as if kitsch could justify their decision to move to this patently unglamorous place.

"You make it awfully hard, Mom," Helen said, finally.

"Oh, I'm sorry," Dorothy sighed, her expression genuinely penitent. "But for some reason having cancer gives everyone else the feeling they can order you around. Like you don't know what's good for yourself, now that you've been stupid enough to contract this disease."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't apologize."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't— "

But Helen was smiling, and Dorothy's eyes lit up at the memory. Dorothy had despised Helen's habit, when she was younger, of apologizing for everything and everyone around her—which was, in itself, a reaction, Helen had begun to think, to her mother's uncomfortable insistence on truthfulness. After months of Helen's complaining about a certain irrationally mean science teacher, Dorothy had walked right up to the woman at an open house—a woman who was half a foot taller than she—and asked her if she was experiencing menopause. Helen had spent much of her youth trying to position herself at a physical and psychological ten-foot remove from her mother.

She put the granola bar back in her purse. They were good together this way, teasing each other. When Helen had discovered the affair, she flew to New York. It was a strange impulse—to seek out her mother for emotional succor—and she was almost frightened when she arrived at the apartment, certain that her mother, never a baker of chocolate-chip cookies or a soother of feverish foreheads, would only make her feel worse. She had spent the weekend in an old Lanz nightgown that her mother had saved, standing at the open door of the refrigerator with a hand on her hip, pouting. Dorothy had been a wonder of humor, insisting that they Google "Nathan's girl," as she referred to her, and, together, mother and daughter had stared at a picture of the absurdly named doctor with the dumbfounded awe one feels in the presence of a masterpiece. Candi was pretty enough, with a lustrous mane of brown hair and the kind of ethnic looks that had been smoothed out by cross-fertilization or plastic surgery. She was obviously younger than Helen. But, before Helen could fall into despondency, Dorothy found fault with the set of the woman's eyes, her thin lips, her ironed hair. She could tell that the woman had a "big tush," despite the fact that the image on the computer screen showed her only from the neck up. Her dissection made Helen laugh and feel defended, full of gratitude.

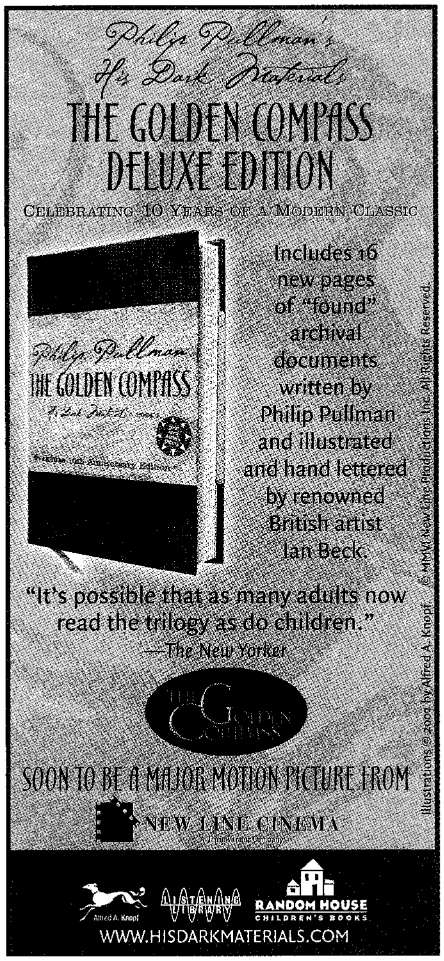
The dim shapes of small villages appeared against the night sky like phantoms, only to disappear into nearly unarticulated darkness. An occasional bright constellation spread across the land, signalling a town of more significance. If she squinted, Helen could make out church steeples, the dark spill of homes on a hillside, and large, low factory buildings. She could have been anywhere in the world. She had never been to Germany before, and now she was seeing the country only as geographic semaphore.

"I need to pee," Dorothy said.

Helen stood up immediately, glad to be necessary. She helped her mother out of their compartment, and, together, they awkwardly negotiated the narrow corridor. Helen held on to her mother as she opened the bathroom door, careful not to let her lose her balance as the train lurched from side to side. Dorothy was as light and fragile as papier-mâché. Helen closed the bathroom door behind them, reached past her mother, and flipped up the metal toilet lid, then steadied Dorothy as she loosened her slacks and eased them down her hips. Dorothy had always been private with her body; Helen could not remember ever having seen her naked before the disease had turned her into a reluctant exhibitionist.

"I think I can take it from here," Dorothy said.

Helen stepped back into the corridor and shut the door. She leaned against the cold windows, trying to get the image of her mother's thighs out of her mind, the way the folds of skin sloped gently toward her pubic area like small waves rippling onto a barren shore. Five minutes later, Dorothy came out of the bathroom, exhausted by the effort. The door swung shut behind her, and she leaned against it as she zipped and buttoned her slacks. Embarrassed, Helen tried to shield Dorothy from the view of the few strangers who lingered farther down the corridor. Her discomfort soon gave way to sadness, as she realized the degree to which the disease had stripped her mother of the identity that had got her through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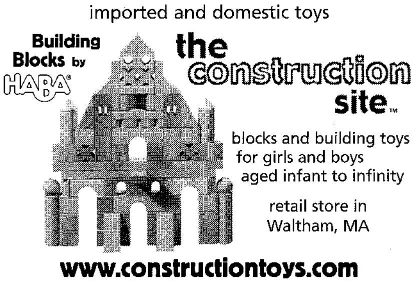
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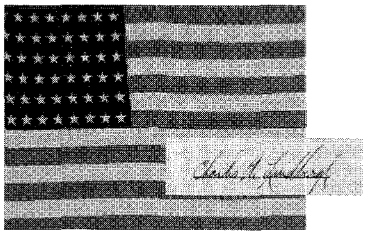

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so much in her life, and with such grace.

"It's like a prison camp in there," Dorothy said. "You'd think they'd make it a little bigger just to avoid the innuendo."

Helen moved to help her.

"I'm fine," Dorothy said, reaching to either side of the corridor and unsteadily making her way back to their compartment.

Helen realized that her arms were still extended toward her mother, as if she could somehow conduct Dorothy to a safe landing. She lowered her hands, feeling ridiculous. Her mother had eschewed help all her life, had put herself through City College by working night shifts as a secretary. After she married Helen's father, she'd helped him open his dental practice, running his office, sometimes masquerading as his assistant when he could afford only a part-time girl. He'd died just when his practice had grown large enough to be worth selling, and even then, despite the reasonable income from the sale, Dorothy had continued to work as the office manager for the new dentist, never for a minute giving in to any maudlin emotion about another man's filling her dear departed husband's white softsoled shoes. She never thought to remarry. "Oh, I did that already," she said simply, when Helen raised the subject, as if marriage were a step in a recipe that you would not want to repeat.

"Would you like me to read to you?" Helen asked, once they were back in their seats.

"What have you got?"

Helen dug eagerly into her bag. "*Vogue. People.* Neruda."

Dorothy smirked. "That's cheap, sweetheart."

"You love Neruda."

"Are we searching for my epitaph?" Dorothy said.

"That's unfair," Helen said, with the requisite amount of hurt in her tone. The truth was that she *had* thought about what to read at her mother's funeral and had made the private decision that it would be Neruda. Though Dorothy was not a fan of poetry and its vagaries in general, Neruda was the one poet she had gone out of her way to read. But was this why Helen had grabbed the book from the shelf on her way out the door in L.A.? Was she this fumbling, this obvious? She began to put the book away.

"Read it," Dorothy said.

"No, it's all right."

"I want to hear it."

"We'll read something else," she said, pulling out the *Vogue* and reading from the cover. " 'The New Stripes.' "

"Read the Neruda," Dorothy said flatly.

Helen checked her mother's face to see on which side of sarcasm she had taken up residence. Dorothy smiled enigmatically; it was the same inscrutable expression Helen remembered from her youth, from, for instance, the day she'd smoked marijuana in the apartment while her mother was at work and then tried to cover it up with some laughably ineffective incense. Dorothy had smiled then, too, saying nothing. But when Helen woke up the next morning she found a note taped to the bathroom mirror. "Smart people are not necessarily decent," it said, and Helen felt as though her mother had reached inside her body and squeezed her heart.

She opened the book and began to read:

> Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
>
> Write, for example, "The night is starry
> and the stars are blue and shiver in the
> distance."
>
> The night wind revolves in the sky and
> sings.
>
> Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
> I loved her, and sometimes she loved me
> too.
>
> Through nights like this one I held her in
> my arms.
> I kissed her again and again under the
> endless sky.

She stopped.

"Mmm. Go on," Dorothy said. Her eyes were closed.

"I'm tired," Helen said.

Dorothy opened her eyes and studied her daughter. Helen looked down at the book. Her tears made the words into a bleary confusion of black smudges. "Oh, shit," she said, trying to banish her sadness with ugly words, words that her mother had taught her never to use, because they were public admissions that you could not find a more exact, more intelligent way to say what you had to say. "I'm so fucked."

"Or not. As the case may be," Dorothy said.

Helen looked up. "Ew," she said.

Dorothy shrugged, delighted.

"Remember when you hired that Cinderella to come to my birthday party?"

Helen said, trying to change the subject. "I thought she really was Cinderella. *The* Cinderella. Come all the way from, you know, wherever, just for my party. You made her take off her wig at the end to show me that she was just some out-of-work actress."

"I always thought there was something evil about those parents who carry on about the tooth fairy and then tell stories about how darling their gullible children are. I don't believe in it."

"You have to believe in something," Helen said, distractedly.

Dorothy did not respond.

"What do you believe in, Mom?"

Dorothy eyed her warily. "Is this one of these before-you-go questions?"

"It's just a question. I'd like to know."

Dorothy turned to look out the dark window. "Well, turns out I'm tired, too," she said, closing her eyes.

The last Philharmonic concert had been a near disaster. The Brazilian pianist on the bill had cancelled at the last minute, due to illness, and a replacement had been called in. The woman, an American, was young, maybe only two or three years older than Helen, but she had a good résumé, had recorded and performed with major symphonies—all the stuff of a strong career on an upward trajectory. The rehearsals had gone well, and the woman was full of humor with the conductor and the orchestra, and even with Helen, sweetly self-deprecating about her need to have the score in front of her, although she knew the piece by heart and had performed it before. "You'll be my security blanket," she said to Helen, who had been surprised by the intimacy of the remark; she was not usually addressed, except on issues that concerned the performance itself, the pianists explaining their particular taste in the timing of the page-turning, how close or far away they wanted Helen to sit. The piece was one that Helen had studied but never performed, and during rehearsal she felt her fingers moving lightly on her thighs. Studying the music a few nights earlier at the upright in her apartment, she had tried to make her way through it, and had been pleased that she could actually make whole passages nearly coherent. Nathan had come out of the bedroom to listen to her, and had applauded when she left off in the middle of a movement, feeling suddenly exposed, as though she were appearing naked before him for the first time.

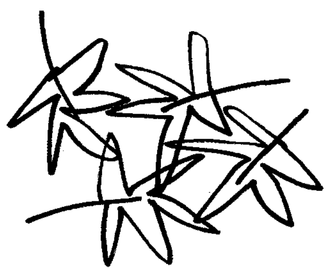
"No, go on," Nathan said.

She shook her head, her face flushing. "It's difficult."

"It sounded great."

She looked at him, trying to suss out his strategy, but his face was wide open with surprise and pleasure. She stood up from the piano stool and went to him. He took her in his arms and she stood with him for a minute or two, realizing how refreshing it was to be with a man who did not think of her as a failure, the way she imagined so many of the musicians she knew must, the way she tried not to think of herself. He was nice that way, Nathan was. He sat in the living room along with the parents and grandparents of her students on recital afternoons, clapping loudly and, afterward, dissecting each student's performance with her, rejoicing in the children's small victories, wincing sympathetically at the memory of their bumbles. He took her seriously, even when she found it hard to do the same.

On the evening of the concert, Helen sat in her chair by the piano, wearing one of her two black concert dresses, subdued and prudish enough not to overshadow the artist; her appearance and movements needed to be so unremarkable as to be practically invisible. This suited her, this negation. It was the only way she could think about herself in relation to music now: as its shadow, its stalker. The pianist adjusted her own deep-red gown, its sleeves netted with rhinestones that would pick up the light and accentuate the hard, swift work of her arms; she adjusted her seat, tossed her loose hair behind her shoulders. Helen always enjoyed the feeling of tense excitement right before a concert began—it was one of the few times in life that you could be sure you were on the verge of pleasure. It was like facing into a giant wave and then allowing it to take you. The pianist made her opening attack with a kind of fury that made Helen's spine shiver. With that flourish, she announced to the conductor and the orchestra that she was going to step things up. She was going to make sure that the audience, disappointed by the program insert, came away grateful for the illness of the replaced performer. She was going to own the piece so completely that no one would remember that it wasn't rightfully hers.



Ten minutes in, however, something happened, something imperceptible to anyone but Helen and the pianist; it was like a skipped heartbeat—the woman's neck stiffened, and she began to peer at the music where before she had largely ignored it. Helen's breath caught high in her chest. She felt as light-headed as she had when she called Nathan's hotel room at a conference in Austin and heard the voice of a woman in the background, followed by Nathan's sharp "No!" And then the silence, full of his miserable inability to take back the mistake; it had been like an unwitting step off a cliff.

The pianist's first slip came midway down a page—a second B-flat where there should have been an A. She kept going, and Helen was careful not to glance up; she wanted to make it appear that the mistake had passed unnoticed. But she could sense the pianist dissembling, could feel it in the atoms between her and the woman, which started to jump about like bubbles in a bottle of soda; she could feel the effect on her skin. The woman was trying to muscle her way back into the closed room of her focussed mind, but things just kept getting worse—a fumbled triad, and then having to make a quarter rest into an eighth in order to get back on track. And then, at the bottom of the next page, just as Helen rose into her half stand and leaned in to make her move, she caught the panicked look in the pianist's eyes and knew that the woman was lost, that her concentration had deserted her, and that the strange alchemy by which a musician could be both inside and outside the music at the same time—both intellectually aware of the orchestra and of all that she had learned and decided about the music, and yet so wholly within the space of her own soul that the music was like speech, integrated and effortless—was coming undone.

Helen turned the page. The pianist

looked at her sharply and Helen knew that she had done wrong. But what could she do? It had been time to turn the page. The music was continuing, the orchestra relentlessly pushing forward. A swift glance at the woman and Helen realized that she was not angry but desperate, and that Helen was now involved in an intimate, silent dialogue with her. The woman was asking Helen to save her. Helen gestured with her chin at the music, smiled in what she hoped was an optimistic way. Just go on, she meant to say. The woman had only to find her place in the line of notes and chords, and slip back in, like a girl stepping into the alternating jump ropes in a game of Double Dutch. She needed to yank her brain away from the accident, the missed notes, as Helen had had to yank hers away from Nathan's damning silence on the phone from Austin, from her mother's diagnosis, and move forward, head toward the next indicated thing, even if there were no directions. But the woman's desperation only grew, and Helen did something that she knew was patently wrong in the etiquette of her job but was equally necessary: she rose fully off her seat, as she did when helping a faltering student through a recital, reached forward, and put her finger on the correct measure, then sat down, hoping that her move had been just swift and subtle enough not to draw the attention of the audience. But she knew that this was impossible.

Eventually, the pianist found her equilibrium, and although the rest of the movement, and the entire concerto, seemed subdued to Helen's ear, there were no more mistakes. The audience was generous; Helen stood by her seat while the conductor and the pianist responded to the loud applause, then followed them offstage, keeping her customary distance behind them so as not to distract. When the pianist and the conductor returned to the stage for a second bow, the pianist shot her a complicated look full of gratitude and sorrow, hatred and shame, all at the same time, and Helen was sent hurtling back to the time when she herself had been unable to make her music perfect, when she had been filled with sadness and rage and hope and the aching sense of being close, but not close enough, to beauty.

Dorothy woke up, moaning.

"Mom?" Helen said, snapping out of her drowsy reverie into full-throttle fear.

Dorothy put her hands to her breastbone. "Hurts," she said, in a high, strained voice. Helen reached across the aisle to where her mother was now doubled over, her head on her knees. Dorothy let out a muted, inhuman bark.

"Can you breathe like that, Mom? Let me sit you up."

She moved next to her mother, and slowly pulled Dorothy's shoulders toward the seat back. Dorothy's face was bloodless.

"Mom?" Helen said. She was terrified, and instantly filled with a grief she'd imagined lay in store for her only later, long after this trip was over, long after her mother had died. But now it seemed that the sorrow had always been there, perhaps from the very start—from the moment she was born and first saw this person, this tiny woman who was to be her protector and guide—that it had been waiting for her ever since. She was horrified to find that her mind had made an acrobatic leap forward, that she was already turning the moment into a reminiscence she'd tell, of her last night on earth with her mother. "We were miles from anywhere," she'd say. "We had a whole compartment to ourselves!"—as if this inexcusable luxury should at least have staved off death.

Dorothy groaned.

"Let me get your purse," Helen said, beginning to rise from the seat. "Do you have any painkillers in there, Mom? Did Dr. Halverson give you something?"

Dorothy reached up and, with surprising strength, pulled Helen down next to her. She whispered something unintelligible.

"What? Mom?" Helen said, leaning close to her mother's face. She could smell Dorothy's sour breath.

"Stop moving," Dorothy said, the words barely audible.

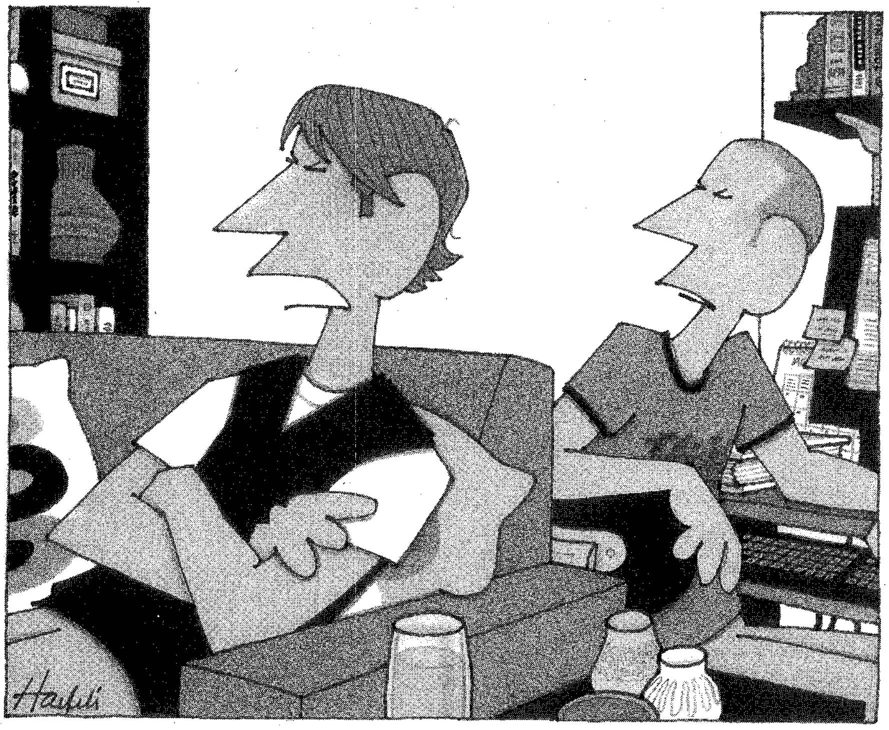
"There's got to be something we can do," Helen said.

"Why?"

Helen realized that she was holding her mother's narrow hand in hers. She couldn't remember the last time she had held her mother's hand. She turned it over, and gently began to stroke her mother's wrinkled palm in circles. "Is that good?" Helen said. "Does that help?"

"Does it?" Dorothy said softly.

Helen wondered if Dorothy was confused. Perhaps the cancer was affecting her brain. She searched her face, but could see nothing more than the mask that Dorothy had put on to barricade herself against the pain.



"Sometimes I think you only married me for the political statement."

"It's too much, Mom. It's just too much," Helen said.

"No," Dorothy whispered, her voice barely audible above the sound of the train. "It's just enough."

The clinic was on the outskirts of town, and it took nearly forty-five minutes to get there by cab. The ride was more horrific than any part of the journey to that point. Even though Dorothy had agreed to take the pain medication that Dr. Halverson had given her, simply getting her up off her train seat took Helen nearly ten minutes. Helen flagged a porter through the open window, and the young man helped her, both with the bags and with the awkward attempt to move Dorothy out of the compartment, through the corridor, down the three metal steps, and onto the platform. Helen could tell that her mother was making a huge effort to hide her pain, but even with her mouth set and her eyes nearly closed her expression was stricken. Helen apologized for the jolts to her mother's body, for the cold smack of air that greeted them on the platform, for the distance they had to cross to reach the cab stand, until she realized that what she really meant to apologize for was the fact that no amount of flinty-eyed pragmatism would help Dorothy through this moment, the fact that simply *being* was sometimes an unbearable mess and what was hoped for in life was so rarely reached, the shortfall so much more fumbling and base than anything one had ever imagined for oneself.

Helen held her mother as the cab bumped and buckled over the streets of Frankfurt. She thought to yell at the driver, to try to make him understand that he had to slow down because her mother was dying of cancer, but she knew that her mother's pain was so deep and pervasive that a gentler cab ride would do nothing to ameliorate it.

The cab pulled up to the curb in front of the clinic. Helen looked out her window. The building was far from the brewery of her fantasy. A genteel-looking Beaux-Arts structure squeezed between a pizzeria and a bookshop—there was nothing to indicate that anything medical went on inside it at all, no symbol of a rod and twisted serpent, not even a wheelchair ramp. Anything could have been taking place behind those bevelled-glass doors—lawyers spinning cases, lovers making arguments of their own. Helen suddenly longed to stay in the cab, to ask the driver to carry on, take them anywhere, nowhere, as long as she could stay sitting like this, with her mother nestled safely in her arms. The driver turned and looked at the women expectantly.

"Are we there?" Dorothy's voice was raw.

"Yes. This is it."

"What are we waiting for?"

Helen paid the driver. He got out of the car to retrieve the bags from the trunk while Helen gingerly helped her mother onto the sidewalk.

"My God, it's cold!" Helen said, buttoning Dorothy's coat up to her neck, and then tugging her own around her as the cab pulled away from the curb. "You couldn't have chosen a better season for this?" she teased. "I hear spring in Germany is lovely." But she was stopped short by Dorothy's expression, which seemed so tentative, as though she were facing not a four-story town house but Mt. Everest, the task looming high and impossible before her. Helen realized suddenly that Dorothy had not made her baffling medical choices because she wanted to die, any more than she chose to live among her withering possessions because she did not desire a future. She understood that her mother wanted to live, but that, standing here on this foreign street, she had momentarily lost her way. The path through this complicated piece of life, which must have seemed so clear to Dorothy just a few days ago, sitting in her apartment in New York, was now as inscrutable as a piece of music could be when first confronted—a wild and alien language of signs that seemed like the ravings of some madman, until you put your hands on the keys and played one note, then the next, then the next. Helen could see panic in Dorothy's eyes, the same panic she'd seen on the face of the pianist, marooned in a sea of sound that suddenly made no sense.

Helen raised her hand and pointed at the door. "This is it, Mom," she said. "This is the place. We just have to walk a few more steps and then we'll be there." But just as she was about to put her arm around her mother, Dorothy drew herself up, somehow guided back to herself by her daughter's confident gesture and voice, and started forward on her own. ♦

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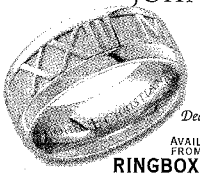

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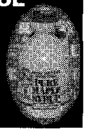

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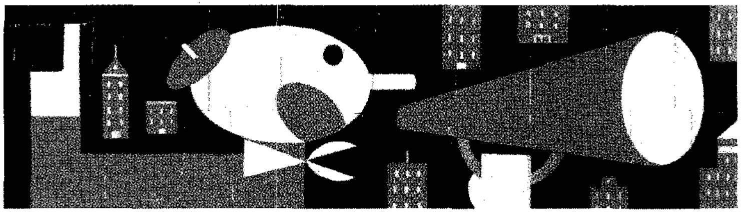

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THINK AGAIN

What did Descartes really know?

BY ANTHONY GOTTLIEB

In "The Chain," a chirpy British film comedy from 1984 about moving house, the foreman of a team of movers is taking evening classes in philosophy, and is prone to metaphysical musings while lugging heavy pieces of furniture. On the way to his first job of the day, he recites what he has learned to his workmates: "What Descartes is saying is 'I think, therefore I am.'"

"Am what?" someone asks.

"Just am."

"Can't just be am. You gotta be am something."

In fact, what Descartes wrote in his "Discours de la Méthode," of 1637, "*Je pense, donc je suis*" (the Latin rendering, "*Cogito, ergo sum*," came later), was always a slightly cryptic formulation. That's what helped make it the most famous—and probably the most misunderstood—slogan in philosophy. And "Am what?" remains a good question to ask of Descartes the man, as two new biographies show. His personality remains an enigma. Vituperative, devious, insincere, proud, and unpredictable in his correspondence, he published works that ooze sweet reason and cool logic. Why did this Frenchman choose to spend most of his adult life away from his native country? Why did he repeatedly tell friends that he craved calm and quiet, then constantly pull up stakes and rush elsewhere? (A team of movers would have come in useful.) He did not, in adulthood, enjoy reading the books of others. So what, exactly, was going on in his head during his long mornings of inactivity?

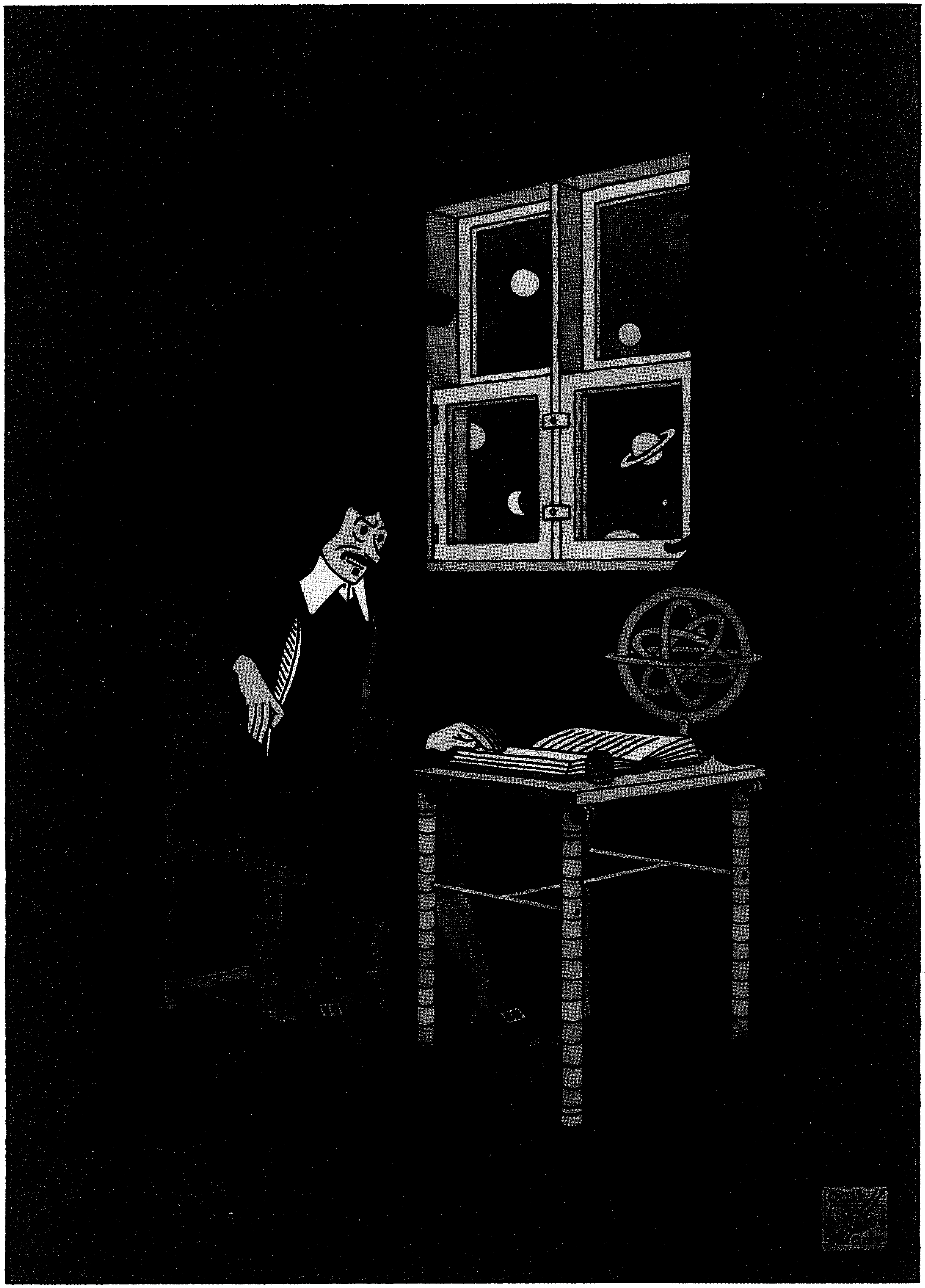
It isn't easy to see Descartes's work the way he saw it—the relationship between science and philosophy has changed too much for that. Despite his current reputation, the man himself seems to have been less interested in metaphysics than in applying algebra to geometry and delving into the innards of cows. He turned to philosophy relatively late in life, and out of fear that the Catholic Church would condemn his science. He would have been surprised at how he is remembered.

Most of all, he would have been aghast at the way in which "I think, therefore I am" has been ripped from its context, inflated into a one-sentence summary of his ideas, and turned into something absurd. The rot set in at the start of the nineteenth century, when Hegel made heavy weather of "I think, therefore I am" and took it to mean that thought and being are fundamentally the same thing. Thus began the myth that modern philosophy is subjective at its roots—a view that was expounded by the late Pope John Paul II, who went so far as to suggest that the origins of Nazism and Communism are somehow linked to Descartes.

The origins of Descartes's slogan are straightforward enough, and it is not easy to see Hitler or Marx prefigured in them. In his "Discourse on Method," which is presented as an intellectual autobiography, Descartes recounts how he aimed to rebuild human knowledge on the firmest foundation. As a first step, to purge himself of error, he tried to cast doubt on as much as possible of what he thought he knew. So he pretended for the sake of argument, as he later put it in his "Meditations on First Philosophy" (1641), that "some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me." Since he could not, at this stage of his inquiries, rule out the existence of such a demon, Descartes reasoned that it was possible to doubt all the evidence of his senses. What he thought he saw, heard, and felt might be a dream somehow procured by the evil deceiver. But then, he says, he realized that there was at least one thing that he could not be wrong about; namely, the proposition that he himself existed. The very act of doubting, of wondering where he might have gone astray, showed that he did exist.

Since the early nineteenth century, Descartes has routinely been called the father of modern philosophy. His attempt at a fresh start for human knowledge, relying on his own reason and casting aside received wisdom, came to typify the Enlightenment project. While his "Discourse" and "Meditations," with their focus on the nature of certainty, the existence of God, and the relation between mind and body, continue to be read by philosophy students, the bulk of his writings, which were on scientific subjects, has been forgotten. In his own day, his physics, cosmology, geometry, and physiology were given at least as much attention. When Molière poked fun at the pretensions of grand Paris ladies, his main target was the fashion for Descartes's astronomy: "I adore his vortexes," Armande coos in "The Learned Ladies," which was first produced in Paris in 1672. "And I his falling worlds," Philamente sighs.

Descartes was one of the precursors of the scientific revolution. Modern applied mathematics is largely based on an invention of his, analytic geometry, which uses algebra to solve practical problems about space and motion. He labored to construct a unified account of nature which would be as all-encompassing as the scholastic system derived from Aristotle but based on the un-Aristotelian "mechanical" principle that physical phenomena are to be explained in terms of contact between moving bodies and the motions and shapes of their parts. In



"I will suppose," Descartes wrote, that "some malicious demon . . . has employed all his energies in order to deceive me."

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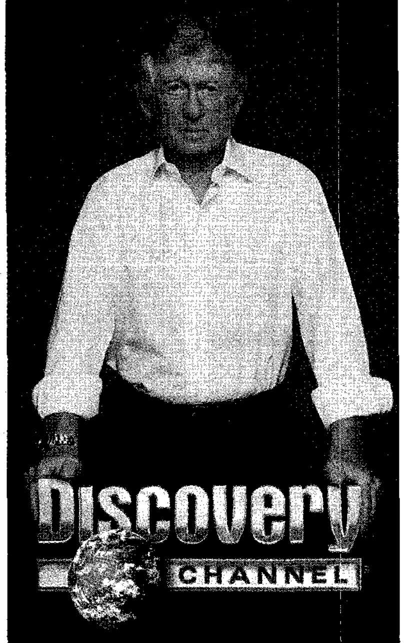


physics and cosmology, Descartes propounded theories that were direct antecedents of Newton's "Principia."

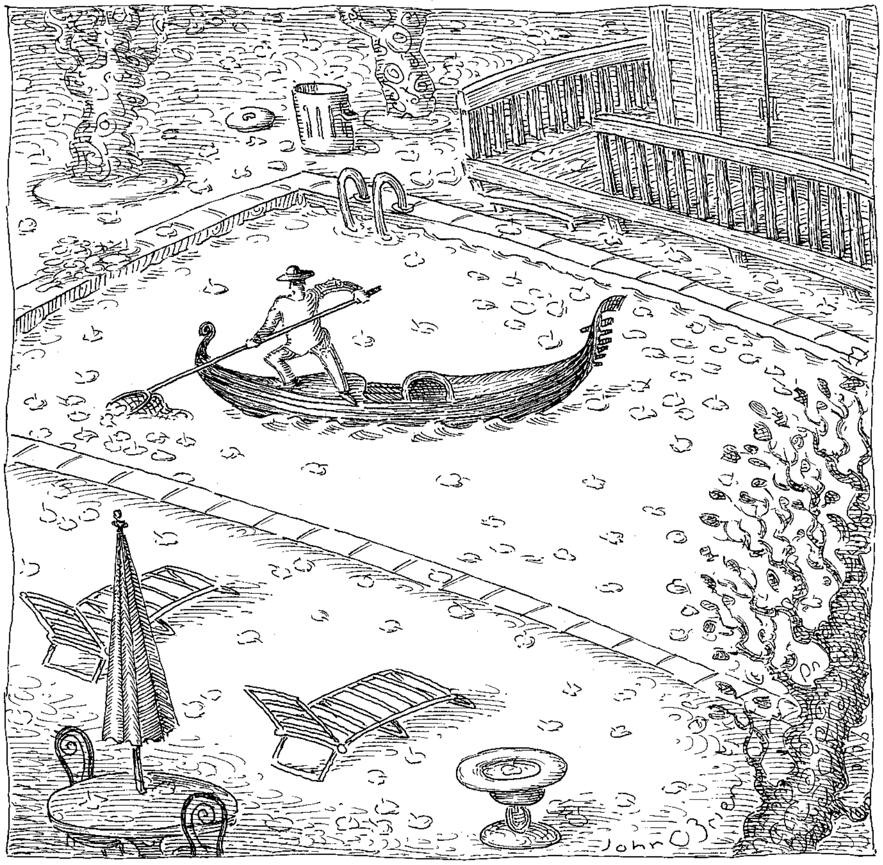
Most of Descartes's scientific work, except for some of his mathematics, has been superseded, which is partly why he is now regarded as a purely abstract thinker. Much of his life, though, was spent in experiments, observations, calculations, and dissections. His explanation of the rainbow, for instance, was a landmark in optics, and almost right. He discovered the law of refraction, which explains why a straight stick can appear bent when partly immersed in water (though this discovery had been made earlier and independently). And Descartes was one of the first to demonstrate in detail that the workings of human bodies could be studied as if they were machines.

In "Descartes: A Biography" (Cambridge; $40), Desmond Clarke, a leading Descartes scholar at the National University of Ireland, Cork, argues that Descartes's philosophy is distorted if it is not seen in the context of his wider scientific enterprise. Descartes certainly played down his own purely philosophical writings. In a letter to his friend Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, in June, 1643, and again in a conversation with a theology student, Frans Burman, who interviewed him in April, 1648, Descartes warned against paying too much attention to his metaphysics. Read it once, he said, and move on. His "Discourse," with the famous slogan, was published merely as a preface to a collection of treatises on optics, meteorology, and geometry. Clarke reminds us that Descartes's philosophical works were intended to establish credentials for his system of nature, and to make it theologically acceptable. The "Meditations" originally bore the subtitle "in which are demonstrated the existence of God and the immortality of the soul." Indeed, Clarke's most distinctive claim is that Descartes's account of the mind as an immaterial substance—his famous "dualism" of the mental and the physical, sometimes known as the doctrine of "the ghost in the machine"—is at best a provisional theory, aimed at providing support for the Catholic doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and sits uneasily with many other things that he wrote.

Descartes's dualism is certainly not quite what it is often taken to be. In the 1994 best-seller "Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain," the neurologist Antonio Damasio reports that Descartes believed in an "abyssal separation between body and mind . . . the separation of the most refined operations of mind from the structure and operation of a biological organism." This is actually the opposite of what Descartes believed. He held that we "experience within ourselves certain . . . things which must not be referred either to the mind alone or to the body alone," and that these arise "from the close and intimate union of our mind with the body." In his best-known writings, Descartes stressed the differences between matter (which occupies space) and thought (which does not). But he also maintained that, in human beings, mind and body are mysteriously and inextricably combined, as he tried to spell out in letters to Princess Elizabeth. (She kept pressing him on the point.) He could not explain how it is that mind and body are united, but he was sure that they were.

Another new biography, "Descartes: The Life and Times of a Genius" (Walker; $26.95), by A. C. Grayling, a prolific British philosopher and newspaper columnist, offers no revisionist interpretation of Descartes's thought but, instead, a highly readable tale with a startling suggestion about his life. Descartes, Grayling reckons, may have been a spy. It's a tempting thought that Descartes was no more the father of modern philosophy than James Bond was a salesman for Universal Exports—that all his geometry and metaphysics was merely a cover for some clandestine derring-do—but Grayling doesn't go quite so far. The possibility he raises is that Descartes did a little intelligence-gathering in the first decade of the Thirty Years' War, as an agent of pro-Hapsburg Jesuits, and that he reported back to the Jesuits about occultist sympathizers. This, Grayling thinks, would help to explain some of his travels and how he paid his way. There is, alas, not a scrap of hard evidence for this theory—Descartes was either no spy or else one of the most successfully secretive there has ever been. This is probably why no historian has mooted it before, and why none is likely to think it worth refuting now.

But is Grayling's spy theory any more fanciful than the late Pope's account? In "Crossing the Threshold of Hope" (1994), John Paul II says that, for Descartes, "only that which corresponds to



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human thought makes sense. The objective truth of this thought is not as important as the fact that something exists in human consciousness." Later, in "Memory and Identity," published in 2005, John Paul II argues further that the philosophical revolution brought about by Descartes downgraded God and put the mind of man in his place: "according to the logic of *cogito, ergo sum*, God was reduced to an element within human consciousness." In other words, Descartes inaugurated a shift to a view of the world in which the "I" is the foundation of everything, and a selfish monstrosity rules.

Given that Descartes did not mince his words when attacking his critics—the writings of one French mathematician were "impertinent, ridiculous and despicable"; the rector of the University of Utrecht was "stupid," "malicious," and "incompetent"; the work of Pierre Fermat, the greatest mathematician of his time, was "shit"—one wonders what he would have said about John Paul II. For Descartes repeatedly makes it clear that his own existence (and, indeed, that of the whole world) depends on God, not the other way around. Those who suspect Descartes of rampant subjectivism have confused the style of his reasoning with its substance. Descartes cast his philosophical inquiries in an autobiographical style. He looked within himself. But there was nothing subjective about what he found:

> When I consider the fact that I have doubts, or that I am a thing that is incomplete and dependent, then there arises in me a clear and distinct idea of a being who is independent and complete, that is, an idea of God. And from the mere fact that there is such an idea within me, or that I who possess this idea exist, I clearly infer that God also exists, and that every single moment of my entire existence depends on him. . . . And now, from this contemplation of the true God, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and the sciences lie hidden, I think I can see a way forward to the knowledge of other things.

It's true that the informal, meandering style that makes his philosophical works engaging to read can also make their structure elusive. He writes that the certainty of his own existence is the "first principle" of his philosophy. But this just turns out to mean that it is the first certainty that he decided to accept, not that anything else is based upon it. Actually, Descartes infers nothing from his own

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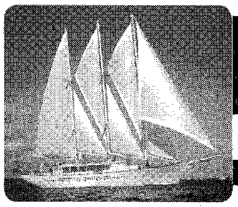
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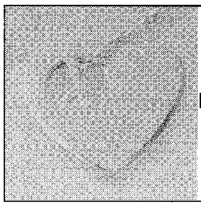
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existence. Instead, he asks how he comes to possess this one certainty, so that he can then find other certainties in the same way. The secret of that certainty is just that it involved "a clear and distinct perception of what I am asserting." Crucially, Descartes then introduces God. He offers several arguments for the existence of God, and, having satisfied himself that there must be a God, he reasons that this God, being good, would not allow His creatures to be seriously deceived, provided that they exercise some restraint and confine their beliefs to what they "clearly and distinctly" perceive to be true. Thus Descartes's system of knowledge depends not on his own existence but on God's.

René Descartes was born into the upper bourgeoisie on March 31, 1596, in a village then called La Haye, in the Loire Valley. Always a secretive man—his motto was *Bene vixit, bene qui latuit* ("He lives well who is well hidden")—he would not allow his date of birth to be published in his lifetime, for fear that someone might cast his horoscope. His father had hoped that he would follow him into legal practice and provincial officialdom, and marry well. In the event, René disappointed his father's dynastic ambitions, though his older brother, Pierre, delivered the goods, and the family acquired the lowest degree of nobility in 1668. René inherited some farms from his mother's family, and then sold them to help pay for his life as a gentleman scholar. His father said that he was the only son to have disappointed him, because he was "ridiculous enough to have himself bound in calfskin."

Descartes's mother died when he was fourteen months old, and his father entrusted his upbringing to relatives. At the age of ten, René was sent to the recently established Jesuit College of La Flèche. His health was weak, and a kinsman, Father Charlet, who was the rector of the school, managed to secure him special treatment. He had his own room and was allowed to laze in bed in the mornings, which became a lifelong habit. The other boys had to rise at 5 A.M.; Descartes apparently did not rouse himself until Mass at ten.

In 1614, he left the Jesuits to study law at Poitiers, graduating and rejoining his family two years later. How he then occupied himself is a mystery, but in 1618 he began his travels, aiming, as he later said, to "roam about in the world, trying to be a spectator rather than an actor in all the comedies that are played out there." He decided to enroll as a gentleman (i.e., unpaid) soldier in the army of Prince Maurice of Nassau, outside Breda, on the truce lines between the north and the south of the Netherlands. Descartes was rather bored, contenting himself with some painting, military architecture, and learning Flemish. It was thanks to an apparently chance meeting in the street in Breda that his intellectual career began to take shape.

On November 10, 1618, Descartes was reading a mathematical puzzle posted in Flemish on a billboard, and asked a passerby, Isaac Beeckman, to translate it into Latin. Seven years older than Descartes, Beeckman had just completed his medical degree while earning his living as an engineer and candlemaker. He was interested in applying mathematics to mechanics, explaining regularities in physical phenomena in terms of the behavior of their minute constituents—an approach to science which began to flourish in Holland in the late sixteenth century. The two men struck up a close friendship, and Descartes became, in effect, Beeckman's apprentice, using his mathematical skills (which were by all accounts superior to Beeckman's) to solve problems set by his master. It is unclear whether or not Beeckman was one of the catalysts for the revelation that Descartes claims to have had at the age of twenty-three, a year to the day after his first meeting with him. That was when he went to bed after a day's excited contemplation in which he discovered the "foundations of a marvellous science," and had a series of vivid dreams that changed his life. Possibly, it was a nervous breakdown rather than the intellectual breakthrough that Descartes later made it out to be. Either way, within a few years he seems to have been set on a life of learning, focussing on the natural sciences and mathematics.

The night of dreams took place in Neuburg, as Descartes was journeying to rejoin the army of Maximilian of Bavaria, with whom he had enlisted after leaving Prince Maurice's ranks. In the next decade, he travelled in Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Italy; did some of his most important work in geometry and optics; and started writing a treatise on the scientific method, which he never finished. In late 1628, he moved to the United Provinces (the northern, and Protestant, part of the Netherlands) and spent all but six months of the rest of his life there, living at twenty-four or more addresses in twenty years. Nobody has managed to shed much light on why he was so restless. (Grayling thinks that his spying days were over by then.) But it is lucky that he was, since he otherwise might not have written so many letters. What emerges from his correspondence is that Descartes was difficult, wildly ambitious, and hungry for fame. He rarely seems to have been a soul at peace.

At about the time of his move to the United Provinces, Descartes began work on "Le Monde," a pair of treatises giving a mechanistic approach to physics, cosmology, and physiology. While in Amsterdam, around 1630, he visited butchers' shops every day to get carcasses for dissection. (Grayling mistakenly credits Descartes with the first known observation of a conditioned reflex, in 1630. In fact, Descartes made no observation and was just guessing: "I reckon that if you whipped a dog five or six times to the sound of a violin, it would begin to howl and run away as soon as it heard that music again." Contrary to Grayling's claim, there is no reason to think that he ever actually whipped a dog, though he may on another occasion have dissected a live one.)

In 1633, Descartes's original scientific work pretty much came to an end, when, in July, Galileo was condemned by the Inquisition in Rome, and his recently published "Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems" was burned. Descartes immediately decided to lay aside "Le Monde." Although little harm could have come to him in the United Provinces (or, probably, in France, where there was no Inquisition, and considerable sympathy for Galileo), Descartes wanted to avoid arguments with theologians.

The main objection to Galileo's work was ostensibly its heliocentrism. The Church still maintained that the sun went around the earth, not vice versa. After all, the Psalms say that the earth

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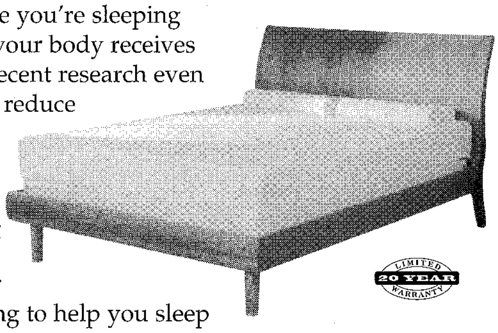

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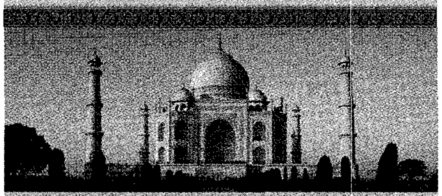

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cannot be moved; Genesis says that the earth was created before the sun; and Joshua told the sun and the moon to stand still while the children of Israel attacked the Amorites, which (it was argued) he would not have done if the sun was already still. Descartes knew that the earth did move. He wrote in November to his old friend Marin Mersenne that if this view were false then so, too, were the whole foundations of his system.

It was at this point that Descartes turned to the metaphysics and philosophizing about knowledge for which he is now remembered. He also turned to sex, some speculate for the first time. His daughter, Francine, was born in 1635 to Helena Jans, a maid in a house in Amsterdam where Descartes stayed. Francine died of scarlet fever five years later. She seems to have spent some time with Descartes, who pretended that she was his niece. A bizarre myth began to circulate in the eighteenth century that Descartes was accompanied on his later travels by a life-size mechanical doll that he called Francine. This seems to have been a gibe at the mechanistic view of nature which his philosophical works sought to underpin.

In the course of his “Meditations,” he argued that the properties of physical objects that he could “clearly and distinctly” understand were measurable dimensions in space, geometric shape, duration, and motion, but that, “as for all the rest, including light and colours, sounds, smells, tastes, heat and cold and the other tactile qualities, I think of these only in a very confused and obscure way.” In other words, he was claiming that the only physical facts of which knowledge can be guaranteed by recourse to God, who would not deceive us about things that we can “clearly and distinctly” grasp, are precisely the elements of his mechanistic system of nature. Descartes thereby provided, or so he thought, a justification that would appeal to the Church for his view that all natural phenomena can be explained by the principles of geometry and pure mathematics. He could not find any support for those views in the Psalms, Genesis, or Joshua, but he could at least bring God into the picture.

It did him no good. Descartes not only failed to win over the theologians of his day but forever weakened his philosophy in trying to do so. The flimsiest parts of his “Discourse” and “Meditations,” as generations of undergraduates learn, are his proofs of the existence of God, and his argument that God would not deceive us. (Mersenne noted that God sometimes misled people in the Bible, so divine deception wasn't easily ruled out.) Several of Descartes's works were placed on the Index of forbidden books by the Catholic Church in 1663. The Church worried that his account of matter might be inconsistent with the Eucharist, and that he did not make the mind sufficiently independent of the body.

In France, men of letters and society ladies warmed to Descartes long before universities did. But in 1720 he achieved part of his ambition, when some of his books were put in the curriculum of the University of Paris. They did not, however, supplant Aristotle, as Descartes had always wanted, but were set for study alongside him.

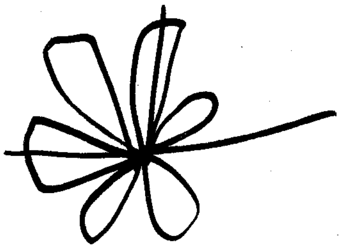
Descartes died, of pneumonia, in Stockholm in 1650, at the age of fifty-three, having unwisely procured an invitation from Queen Christina of Sweden, and then even more unwisely accepted it. In the coldest Swedish winter in sixty years, he found himself obliged to stand bare-headed at five in the morning in Christina's library to give her philosophy lessons. It was a cruel change for a man who was not exactly a morning person. Four years later, the Queen abdicated and converted to Catholicism, prompted, she wrote, by Descartes's teachings.

He was buried in Sweden under a simple wooden monument that was allowed to rot. Seventeen years later, his remains were exhumed and taken on a six-month journey to France, except for his right forefinger, which the French Ambassador to Sweden was allowed to keep, and his head, which was removed by a captain in the Swedish guards. In France, his body was exhumed and reburied three more times before coming to rest in a former Benedictine monastery in Saint-Germain-des-Près. The Musée de l'Homme, in the Palais de Chaillot, near the Eiffel Tower, claims to have Descartes's skull, but the claim is weak. It seems that the great dualist's head is still missing. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

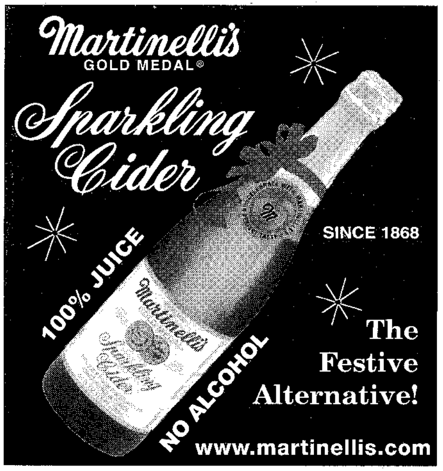
Lisey's Story, *by Stephen King (Scribner; $28).* In his intricate new novel, King explores two hidden worlds—the private life of a recently deceased best-selling writer, as seen from the perspective of his widow, and the imaginative landscape that formed the foundation of his work. As the novel opens, Lisey, Scott Landon's widow, is a sardonic observer of toadying academics, dangerously obsessive fans, and fame-struck bystanders. As she sorts through papers that Landon has left behind, she also becomes a traveller in a fantastical parallel world called Boo'ya Moon, to which he retreated during a horrific childhood and on which he drew throughout his creative life. It takes some time for these narrative strands to converge, but when they do Lisey moves between worlds at an exhilarating pace. Along the way, King also reveals, with subtle precision, the profound strangeness of widowhood, when someone who was present for so much of a shared life is gone.

The Law of Dreams, *by Peter Behrens (Steerforth; $24.95).* Behrens's impressive, swiftly paced saga tracks the life of an Irish boy after his family dies during the Great Potato Famine. Fifteen-year-old Fergus O'Brien takes up with a group of child bandits in Limerick, then makes his way to North Wales, where he works as a "tip boy" (a dangerous job that involves emptying carts of earth being cleared for the railroads). By the time he sets sail for Canada, hoping to make a living as a horse dealer, it is hard to believe that only a year has passed, such is the variety of his experience. In scope and subject, Behrens's work recalls Liam O'Flaherty's epic novel "Famine"; both writers have a stark style admirably suited to conveying the horrors of starvation and despair. But Behrens's language also has a visceral rhythm, and his similes meld the humble with the lyrical: whales rise "hissing" in a river, light "stutters" off an iron roof.



The War of the World, *by Niall Ferguson (Penguin; $35).* Ferguson's eight-hundred-page reëvaluation of the Second World War presents itself as a grand theory about ethnic conflict, the end of empire, and the postwar triumph of the East. The exact contours of the theory, however, remain unclear. Ferguson argues that the central story of the twentieth century is "the descent of the West," but he never really clarifies what "the West" means—Russia sometimes qualifies, sometimes not, depending upon what point Ferguson is trying to make. Ferguson is a skilled storyteller, and he offers many striking reflections on the bloodiest years of the past century, including a compelling analysis of appeasement. Unfortunately, the book as a whole is marred by sweeping judgments and jarring contradictions. A number of odd moves—such as the grouping of Hoovervilles with Soviet labor and German concentration camps—point up another conspicuous shortcoming: Ferguson's failure to make sense of America's power.

Motorcycle, *by Mick Walker (Johns Hopkins; $35).* This illustrated history charts the design and engineering developments that shaped the modern motorcycle. Walker shows how the vehicle's evolution from the steam-powered bicycles of the eighteen-sixties was influenced by technological innovations in the airplane and auto industries, and also by lessons that manufacturers learned from the world of motor racing. Modern "superbikes" can traverse the Sahara and reach speeds of a hundred and seventy-five miles per hour. While it helps to be up on basic internal-combustion workings (a glossary is provided for those who don't know their camshafts from their crankcases), even the mechanically maladroit can enjoy the copious images, which feature such curiosities as snapshots of early sidecars—one a fully enclosed camper, big enough to sleep in, another a policeman's jail cell on wheels, for instantaneous imprisonment.



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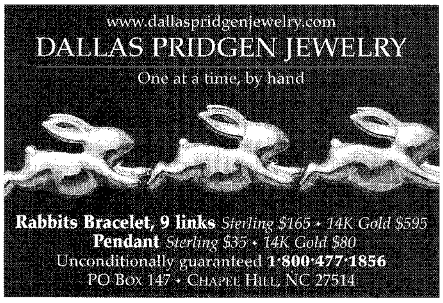

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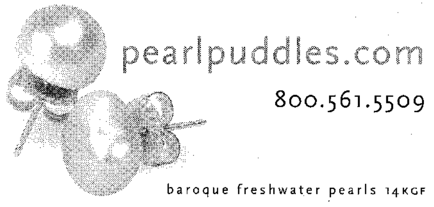

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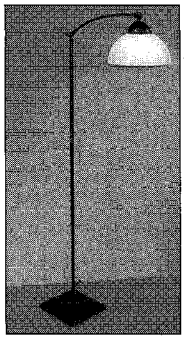

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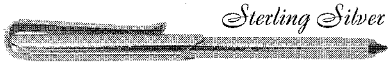

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POP MUSIC

HEAVY WEATHER

Deftones' new album.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

In the late eighties, two teen-age skateboarders, Camilo (Chino) Moreno and Stephen Carpenter, met in Sacramento and began talking about music. Carpenter, who liked aggressive heavy metal, had been hit by a drunk driver while skateboarding and had bought an elaborate guitar rig with money he won as a settlement. Moreno was a fan of the morose British band Depeche Mode and the Washington, D.C., hard-core punk pioneer Bad Brains. Eventually, he joined Carpenter's new band, Deftones, as the lead singer. (The name is a pun on "def," a term of approbation in hip-hop, and "tone deaf.")

When Deftones' first album, "Adrenaline," was released, in 1995, the group was described as part of an emerging genre called "nu metal," which also included the bands Korn (with whom Deftones toured), Limp Bizkit, and, several years later, the extremely popular Linkin Park. These groups took pride in playing well and shared a fondness for expensive equipment and the distorted guitar sounds of eighties metal bands like Metallica and Slayer. They also tended to equate music-making with catharsis, whether their lyrics dealt with child abuse (Korn), bitterness (Limp Bizkit), or cryptic epiphanies about life and death (Deftones).

Deftones are as loud and aggressive as any other nu-metal band, but stranger. Much of their music is built from resonant, glowing major chords, but the band rarely creates beauty without sabotaging it. Within a single song, the music will shift from invitingly soft harmonic passages—say, Moreno's delicate moaning layered over Carpenter's cloudy guitar—to clipped, repetitive motifs punctuated by hoarse barking and shrieking. (Moreno's lyrics, when you can discern them through the fantastic din, are oblique. The words to what seems to be the chorus of "Street Carp," one of the band's loveliest and most acoustically punishing songs, are "Well, here's my new address: 664 . . . oh, I forget. There's your evidence; now take it home and run with it.") The only predictable element in a Deftones song is the precise drumming of Abe Cunningham, a powerful musician who provides a sense of order. One of the chief pleasures of listening to the music is the suspense it creates: in every song, there is the imminent possibility that chaos will get the upper hand.

In 2003, I listened almost daily to "Minerva," from "Deftones," the band's fourth album. It begins with Moreno playing a high, tentative phrase on his guitar. This figure is then obliterated by what could be one, two, or fifteen chords—the space between notes has become imperceptible. The music is distorted in such a way that you can hear many harmonic overtones on top of the original notes. It's a lot for the ears to process, like the sound of seven people talking on a party line. A minute or so later, the chords change, and Moreno sings an intelligible line: "And God bless you all, for the song you saved us." It's as if he were talking to the song itself, thanking all the notes whizzing around him.

Listening to "Minerva," or to any of Deftones' best songs, is a bit like driving through a snowstorm: you lose your bearings, and it's both scary and delightful. (One day, I was playing "Minerva" on my headphones while walking in SoHo and failed to notice a small crane swinging a load of Sheetrock across the sidewalk. I felt a wind at my back and turned to see several thousand pounds of plaster sail into a doorway, inches from my head. Deftones had blocked out the world.) The band's ability to overwhelm the senses makes its music satisfying, but that may also be what prevents the group from scoring hits. In 1999, the video for "Change (In the House of Flies)" was played constantly on MTV, but none of the band's singles have entered the Billboard Hot 100.

Most big pop singles consist of simple phrases, set to fully realized melodies and accompanied by identifiable instruments. In a way, Deftones' songs aren't songs at all but, rather, gloriously textured backdrops of sound that establish a sense of heightened emotion. The band's most recent albums, last year's "B-Sides and Rarities" and the brand-new "Saturday Night Wrist," provide ample evidence of this foggy sound's versatility. "B-Sides" seems to have been designed to discourage fans who like the band merely because it is frequently raucous: it features covers of the Smiths, the British practitioners of regal self-pity; the Cocteau Twins, who made gauzy rock so impenetrable that many of their lyrics have yet to be deciphered; the Southern rock band Lynyrd Skynyrd, whose only apparent link to Deftones is that it sings in English; and "No Ordinary Love," by Sade, the R. & B. crooner. Deftones take weird bits of these songs and make them sound like natural pieces of their repertoire. The arrangement for "No Ordinary Love" is especially clever: the band thickens the original bass and drum parts, and Moreno, singing in falsetto, highlights the sense of betrayal in Sade's words ("Didn't I tell you what I believe? Did somebody say that a love like that won't last?"). The band creates the impression that it has always been as restrained and subtle as Sade; volume had simply obscured the fact.

Deftones create gloriously textured backdrops of sound. Photograph by Dan Winters.

On "Saturday Night Wrist," the band returns to the exultant mood of "Deftones," its near-perfect fourth album. The first single, "Hole in the Earth," is a miniature apocalypse, alternating between billowing rapture and fearsome pounding. It begins with a few seconds of awkward feedback. Then the band lays into a burly riff, custom-built for head-banging. But suddenly that ends, and the song turns into a nimble waltz, progressing through gorgeous, arpeggiated phrases. Moreno's lyrics, delivered slowly in his caramel tenor, do not settle on a single theme. ("Can you explain to me how you're so evil, how?" he sings at one point, and later, "I hate all of my friends, they all lack taste sometimes.")

"Mein" is another satisfying combination of supple, almost submissive vocals and hard, unforgiving rhythm. Cunningham plays a rolling drum pattern, and, when an extra beat is added to a bar in the chorus, holds the band to the time signature, like a crossing guard ushering children to the curb. Moreno is in a dreamy frame of mind. "I've looked outside, but I never wandered out," he sings, drawing out each word. The song performs a neat trick: although Moreno sings at a narcotic pace, the music sounds as though it were speeding up—an illusion produced by the subtle change in rhythm. (On other songs, Deftones make a point of showing that they can still be bumptious. "Pink Cellphone," for example, starts as a vague, ambient track and ends with a woman reciting—perhaps on a pink cell phone—a monologue about anal sex and British teeth.)

At Deftones' last show in New York City, at the Hammerstein Ballroom in 2003, the band, led by Moreno, played with unwavering intensity for close to two hours. Moreno is a man of average size who often dresses in the modest uniform of Californian skaters: Dickies pants, a short-sleeved work shirt, and Converse sneakers. With his black hair and small beard, Moreno, who is thirty-three, looks like someone who's stranded between boyhood and adulthood. He sang many of the prettier passages with his head craning upward and his eyes closed. During the songs' convulsive moments—such as in "Street Carp," when he repeats "So write it down now, did you get it? Get it?" eight times—Moreno hunched over, as if he were retching into the microphone. He didn't let up until the show was over. ♦

ON TELEVISION

KILLER SERIAL

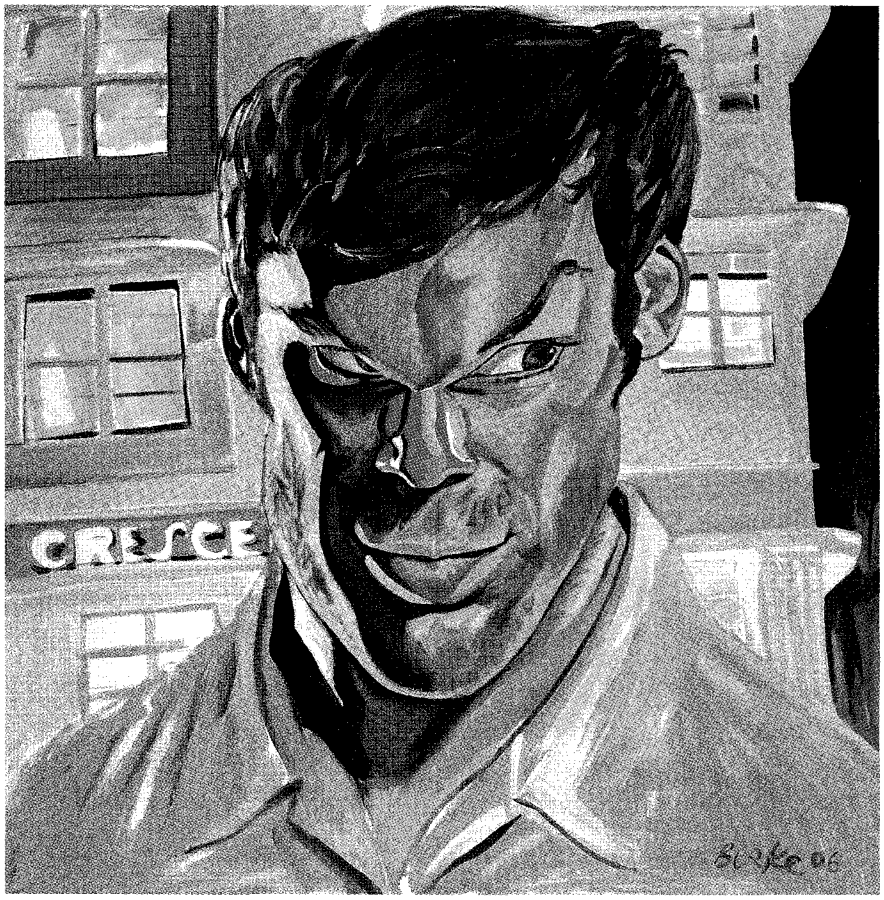
The creepy appeal of "Dexter."

BY TAD FRIEND

Most vigilante dramas plant their outrages up front—the murder of the architect's wife in "Death Wish," for instance—to enlist our approval of the ensuing slaughter of punks and loiterers. Showtime's "Dexter" skips all that, daring us to turn away. The pilot opens on a bleached-out Miami Beach evening, with Dexter Morgan (Michael C. Hall) cruising around and telling us, in zombielike tones, that he loves the city and its Cuban food, "but I'm hungry for something different now." Chinese? Apparently not. Dexter abducts a choirmaster and forces the man to confront the exhumed bodies of his youthful victims: "Look, or I'll cut your eyelids right off your face." Then he strips the man, binds him to a table, and revs his drill. Cue ungodly screams.

By day, a blood-spatter analyst for the Miami police, a master of reconstructing crimes from drips and spray, Dexter moonlights as a serial killer, preying on murderers who have escaped the cops' notice or a jury's reach, particularly those who killed or orphaned children. If you like rough justice, he's the best cop on the force—a one-man posse and hanging judge. (His pursuits don't always bear scrutiny, however. He uses his laptop to research an acquitted D.U.I. killer named Matt Chambers, and instantly pulls up clippings showing that the guy was involved in several other D.U.I.s—each time under a different name. So, let's see, you enter "Matt Chambers" and "aliases used" on Google . . .)

With rare exceptions, the detective genre demands that its savants pay for their acuity with a stunted personal life: hence Adrian Monk's O.C.D. and Columbo's imaginary wife. "Dexter," based on Jeff Lindsay's popular and rather purple novel "Darkly Dreaming Dexter," takes this deficit about as far as it can go. Our hero followed his foster father into police work, shares his doughnuts at the station, chimes in on the banter. But his true personality resembles his apartment: a sterile condo with the curtains drawn. Michael C. Hall, best known as David the repressed undertaker, on HBO's "Six Feet Under," is entirely convincing as a sociopath: his suet-lipped smile lingers a moment too long, and his movements and conversation are so robotic you half expect to see bionic relays glowing beneath his skin. At one point, he hands his foster sister and fellow-cop Deb (a coltish Jennifer Carpenter) an unwrapped gift.



Michael C. Hall is entirely convincing as a sociopathic Miami cop.

PHILIP BURKE

> DEB (*mock enthusiasm*): It's a cactus!
> DEXTER: You only have to water it three times a year.
> DEB: Gee, Dex, you didn't have to go out of your way.
> DEXTER: I didn't. I was at the swap meet.

The continuing story in this twelve-episode season concerns a psycho who kills hookers, drains their blood, and carves them into *objets*. Dexter admires his work the way Braque admired Picasso's, and uses his warped intuition to channel his rival's methods, telling Deb that the killer must have a refrigerated truck: "He wants a cold environment to slow the flow of blood." The Ice Truck Killer seems to be onto Dexter, too, and begins taunting him with clues. (The Serial-Killer Handbook requires that victims be accessorized with anagrams and rebuses.) Soon, predictably, the clues begin to point to Dexter himself.

It's hard to get worked up about Dexter's peril, because he keeps telling us that he expects and deserves to be caught, calling himself "a very neat monster" and "the little wooden boy." The sparks of dry humor he shoots off (naming his motorboat Slice of Life, for instance) may indicate that he's more human than he wants to admit, although in the uneven first few episodes it's hard to tell. We get a better sense of Dexter's icy relish of Grand Guignol from the show's credit sequence—lurid slow-mo closeups of him nicking himself shaving, then severing an orange and some fried-egg yolks—than from all his Vincent Price-ish voice-overs.

There's not much camaraderie at Dexter's station house, but the show tries to convince us that his colleagues are crusty yet decent folks who happen to be missing a part of themselves, just like Dexter (or those hookers). This campaign fails, partly as a consequence of Showtime's tendency to build shows around oversized characters like Dexter, who are solid by day and crumble at night (the shrink with issues in "Huff"; the suburban-mom pot dealer in "Weeds"). In ensemble shows such as HBO's "Entourage" or "The Wire," the characters all have room to breathe; at Showtime, elements of the supporting cast often feel like afterthoughts—for instance, the huffy black matriarch on "Weeds," who's always clucking about the white folks.

Another problem is that, because Dexter's co-workers never suspect him, they seem dim. Muscle-bound Sergeant Doakes (Erik King) is the one exception—"I'm watching you, motherfucker," he snarls at Dexter—but then that's also more or less his standard greeting. Dexter's boss, Lieutenant Maria LaGuerta (a stolid Lauren Velez), is watching him, too. Inexplicably, she thinks he's hot. Inexplicably, too, she hates his sister. When Deb finds the killer's refrigerated truck, LaGuerta barks out mean-boss gibberish: "You pull a stunt like that again, it won't matter who your father was." Having made her seem like a hateful pinhead, the writers backtrack laboriously, dragging in a Cuban orphan for her to hug and the mother of a kidnapped security guard for her to console. When she huddles with the mother and her friends in church, the woman confides, with a catch in her voice, "You brought us all here together by giving us hope."

Fortunately, two characters emerge to help Dexter—and us—realize his potential. In a series of flashbacks, we learn that Dexter's late foster father, Harry (a brooding, careworn James Remar), was the one person who understood him, who knew that something—perhaps the unremembered events that orphaned the boy—made him a freak. "You can't help what happened to you," Harry tells his son, "but you can make the best of it"—a classic TV-dad exhortation, except that he's encouraging Dexter to play out his unspeakable fantasies on other killers. With a devotion as touching as it is creepy, Harry uses his cop's expertise to teach Dexter how to look and sound in order to fit in. In the midst of dismembering a sex fiend, Dexter answers his cell phone and, when asked what he's doing, replies with exactly the right touch of harassed absent-mindedness that he's "just finishing up a little project."

The linchpin of the show, increasingly, is Dexter's relationship with his girlfriend, Rita (the peppy Julie Benz), whose two young children need his protection. Precisely because she had been raped and battered by her crackhead husband, Rita strikes Dexter as the ideal beard, one who vouches for his normality without requiring him to have sex, an act he fears would be "undignified." At first, Benz seems miscast as a broken-winged bird, but her anxious sweetness is winning, and Dexter begins to worry about his growing affection for her. This is his version of the male concern that a modern woman will be repelled by sexual aggression (Dexter isn't too sure where lust ends and bloodlust begins). But for Dexter, who equates intimacy with palpating someone's spleen, it's a genuine worry. When Rita shows up at his condo dressed for Halloween as Lara Croft, he understands neither why she's come nor who she's supposed to be. "You raid tombs dressed like that?" he says. "Impressive." She gathers up her courage, fights through his evasions, and performs oral sex on him. He, in turn, courageously lets her. Turns out: not so bad.

At such moments, the show finds its voice—not as bleak police procedural but as black comedy. Knowing that he's in way over his head with Rita, Dexter solicits advice from a colleague, who tells him, "Don't go down that emotional road, just go down on her." He bends to the task like a plumber checking under the sink; unfortunately, Rita is in the midst of watching "Terms of Endearment." Later, when Dexter has a husband-and-wife team of immigrant-killers strapped to his killing table, he pauses to inquire about the secret of their marriage. In panicky haste they blurt out that it's all about sharing a dream, and he nods: "That's helpful. Thank you." Then he turns to his drill. A serial killer in search of self-help, reaching out for relationship advice—now that begins to be more than a Showtime character. It might even become a show. ◆

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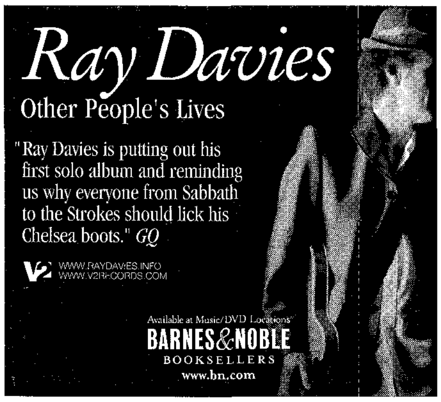
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MUSICAL EVENTS

CYCLES

Beethoven and Shostakovich symphonies at Lincoln Center.

BY ALEX ROSS

In early October, the London Symphony, under the direction of Bernard Haitink, played the nine symphonies of Beethoven at Lincoln Center. At the end of the month, the Orchestra of the Maryinsky Theatre, under Valery Gergiev, unleashed six symphonies of Dmitri Shostakovich in the same venue, concluding a yearlong survey of the complete cycle of fifteen. Implicit in this uptown avalanche of symphonism was the proposition that Shostakovich, whose centenary fell this year, belongs next to Beethoven at the heart of the repertory. That idea remains controversial in some circles—at every Shostakovich performance, I encountered a few people shaking their heads over his inclination toward grandiosity and brutality, his perverse manipulations of form, his habit of freezing harmonic movement while a seemingly trivial motif repeats maniacally—but the rest of the audience thundered its assent. There were many great symphonists in the twentieth century, but Shostakovich, like Beethoven, epitomized his age.

To hear the two cycles in sequence was to feel an agonizing spiritual shift. Beethoven finished his First Symphony in 1800, at a time when the French and American Revolutions were exciting intellectual hopes for the worldwide advance of the rights of man. Mark Evan Bonds, in a fascinating new book entitled "Music as Thought," notes that nineteenth-century listeners understood Beethoven's works as communal ceremonies in which "joy is achieved through synthesis" and the individual happily disappears into the whole. That's the drama of the brawny, odd-numbered symphonies, from the Third through the Ninth, where scenes of a sombre, searching, soliloquizing nature give way to festivities of dancing or marching. In his major-key codas, Beethoven is so insistent on driving home his affirmative message that he runs the risk of sounding stupid. He does not care; joy is not a sophisticated state.

For Shostakovich, communal joy is essentially an alien emotion. Only once, in the Fifth Symphony, from 1937, does he present a classically Beethovenian, through-strife-to-the-stars narrative, and even then the cold magnificence of the finale creates unease. (This excludes the four propaganda symphonies on Communistic subjects, for which a triumphal close was required.) Sometimes the drama ends with a kind of giddy dementia (the First, the Tenth), sometimes with incongruous, faintly scandalous merrymaking (the Sixth, the Ninth), sometimes with a wan, tentatively positive resolution (the Eighth, the Thirteenth), sometimes with whimpering or clattering noises that evoke a death rattle (the Fourth, the Fourteenth, the Fifteenth). Shostakovich's world is a characteristically twentieth-century one, where the broad, straight road is closed off, where wholeness is no longer accessible, where the honest soul wavers between solitary brooding and heedless release.

Yet the two composers are not polar opposites. Beethoven, too, has his wry, perverse, morbid, obsessive moods. Think of the transfixingly strange Scherzo of the Fifth Symphony, when the music effectively stops moving and the timpanist drums lightly on the note C like a finger tapping on a pane. All the jubilation that follows can sound like an attempt to forget whatever existential threat the Scherzo poses. Conversely, Shostakovich at his bleakest still offers his listeners slivers of hope, usually in the form of cryptic jokes. The Sixth Symphony begins with an extended, multipart theme, a kind of solemn oration. In the second section, where you would expect to find a rigorous development of the initial material, Shostakovich instead picks out two details—a minor third and a decorative trill—and fixates on them in a fabulously eerie hundred-and-twenty-bar passage, as if to prove that he can hold you enthralled with next to nothing. At that moment, he and Beethoven are essentially playing the same occult symphonic game.

Haitink, a favorite guest conductor with the London Symphony and with many other orchestras, has the reputation of being a warm and wise musician who shies away from sonic fury. His Beethoven performances—I attended three concerts out of five—didn't belie that image. The London orchestra showed all the qualities that have made its visits to Lincoln Center annual sellout events: evenness of orchestral balance, crispness of rhythmic articulation, warmth of tone, power of attack. Very few orchestras are as effective at communicating their delight in the act of music-making, perhaps because not so many feel it. In these terminally cynical times, the rousing finale of the Fifth can sound forced and empty, but here it burned with the heat of belief. Other passages lacked an element of Romantic mystery, a whiff of the uncanny: the Scherzo of the Fifth created no chill, the Storm of the Sixth never threatened to rage out of control, and the opening movement of the Ninth was slow and stately to the point of being dull. If performances can be excessively humane, these were.

Shostakovich, like Beethoven, epitomized his era.

LAURIE ROSENWALD

Haitink and the London Symphony have also released a set of live recordings of the nine symphonies, on the orchestra's self-run LSO label. It is among the most assured, idiomatic Beethoven cycles to have appeared since Karajan's classic survey of the nineteen-sixties. But it has strong competition from an unexpected source: the Minnesota Orchestra, which is in the process of recording the symphonies under its conductor, Osmo Vänskä. The Ninth has just come out, and it offers textures of supernatural clarity, as if all the grime had been cleaned from the surface of the score. Vänskä, a notorious taskmaster, appears to have sent his players to rhythmic boot camp, getting them to knock out dotted figures with quasi-military snap. At the same time, he has total command of the emotional architecture of the work. This is some of the most vivid Beethoven playing on the market.

Gergiev—who becomes the principal conductor of the London Symphony next year—has also been working his great Maryinsky players perilously hard. They had exactly one day off between October 6th and October 29th, performing in Berkeley, Seattle, Vancouver, Ann Arbor, Pennsylvania, Washington, Newark, Long Island, and New York, and playing an entire "Ring" cycle at the Orange County Performing Arts Center. Gergiev is often described as stretching himself thin, but it's the orchestra that suffers; conducting is, after all, excellent cardiovascular exercise, whereas sitting in a chair playing endless trills night after night is murder. During the first two concerts at Avery Fisher Hall, the players sounded exhausted: there were out-of-breath flute solos in the Sixth Symphony, trumpet flubs in the Eleventh, cloudy string sonorities at the beginning of the Fourteenth. A calculated roughness has long been the Maryinsky's style, but for much of this series the playing also lacked passion—a worrisome sign. Recently, the Bavarian Radio Symphony played the Sixth at Carnegie Hall, under the direction of Mariss Jansons, and the concentration of its playing outclassed that of the Russians at almost every turn.

Gergiev and the Maryinsky did manage one astounding feat: a performance of the immense, glowering Eighth Symphony that will probably linger long in the memory of everyone who was present. This wartime work can sound overbearing in the wrong hands—conductors sometimes turn it into a long-barrelled cannon aimed at the audience—but under Gergiev even the cruellest sounds retained a human, vocal quality. The recurrent climaxes of the symphony, those monster triple-forte chords over a roar of percussion, hit with maximum force, but the quieter passages had even greater impact, as Gergiev showed his wizardly ability to generate a low-hanging mist of timbre in the bass regions of the orchestra. The final pages of the score, in which Shostakovich tries to retrace, insofar as he is able, Beethoven's great march from C minor to C major in the Fifth, were taken at a daringly slow tempo, yet every detail glowed with life, from scattered notes on the flute to the last, rumbling pizzicatos in the basses. If Shostakovich never knew real joy, this performance suggested, he did sometimes know peace. ♦

DEPARTMENT OF CIVILIZED EVENTS

From the Emory University Wheel.

AntiquiTEA: Enjoy afternoon tea and scones as Sarah Scher, a Ph.D. candidate in the art history department, discusses the ritual practice of human sacrifice in the ancient Americas.

THE CURRENT CINEMA

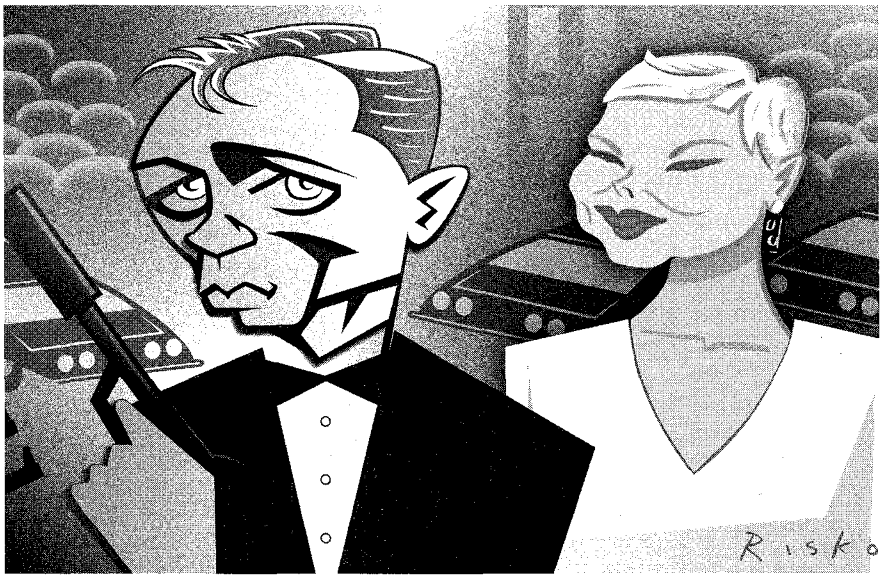
OF HUMAN BONDAGE

"Casino Royale."

BY ANTHONY LANE

Who said this: "It is interesting for me to see this new Bond. Englishmen are so odd. They are like a nest of Chinese boxes. It takes a very long time to get to the center of them. When one gets there the result is unrewarding, but the process is instructive and entertaining." The speaker is Mathis, a kindly French liaison officer in "Casino Royale," Ian Fleming's first James Bond novel, published in 1953. More than half a century later, we are back with "Casino Royale," No. 21 in the roster of official Bond films, and we are back with Mathis. As played by Giancarlo Giannini, who was recently seen having his intestines removed in "Hannibal," he is pouchy, affable, and dangerously wise, and his presence hints that this new adventure will not be an occasion for silliness: no calendar girls, no blundering boffins, no giants with dentures of steel. The same goes for hardware, with rockets and gadgets alike being trimmed to the minimum. It is true that Bond keeps a defibrillator in the glove compartment of his Aston Martin, but, given the cholesterol levels of the kind of people who drive Aston Martins, a heart-starter presumably comes standard, like a wheel jack. Whether Bond has a heart worth starting is another matter.

He is now played by Daniel Craig, as the world knows, and, if I had my way, the world would have shut up about it for the past thirteen months and waited to see the result. Mathis was right: what we get is a Chinese box, although one's initial impression is that the outermost box is a packing crate. I cannot prove it, but I suspect that God may have designed Craig during a slightly hamfisted attempt at woodworking. His head is a rough cube, sawed and sanded, with the blue eyes hammered in like nail heads. He could beat a man's brains out with his brow. That suits the Bond of "Casino Royale," who has only lately acquired his license to kill, and, like a kid who's just passed his driving test, is eager to step on the gas. He will slay anyone, if he so wishes, and the news is that he does so wish, and that he worries about the wishing—not enough to stop the killing, although at one point he tenders his resignation to M (Judi Dench), but enough to make him wonder if he's fit for anything else. Craig has the courage to present a hollow man, flooding the empty rooms where his better nature should be with brutality and threat. His smile is more frightening than his straight face, and he doesn't bother with the throwaway quips that were meant to endear us to the other Bonds. The only thing he throws away is a set of car keys, having borrowed a Range Rover and slammed it backward into a row of parked cars, in order to set off their alarms. Calm down, you want to tell him, have a Martini; and so he does. "Shaken or stirred?" the barman inquires, and Bond spits back at him, "Do I look like I give a damn?"



Daniel Craig and Judi Dench in a Bond film that leans heavily on Fleming's plot.

ROBERT RISKO

The plot, unusually for a Bond picture, leans heavily on the novel. Bond is up against Le Chiffre (Mads Mikkelsen), who has a six-foot-tall mistress, a weepy eye, and nothing to cry about. His pleasure is gambling, and his career as a banker takes him to selected trouble spots, where he likes to meet the locals and help them with their plans for terrorism. What sets Le Chiffre apart from Bond's preceding nemeses is that he has absolutely no interest in running the planet, preferring instead to profit nicely from its ruin. This is a welcome twist, one of the pitiable things about the 007 franchise being its fixation on global conquest—a cheesy homage, I often think, to the ubiquity of the Bond brand itself. When Martin Campbell, the director of "Casino Royale," made "GoldenEye," in 1995, the outcome was spirited enough, but it also felt stupidly grand, all wall-size computer screens and electromagnetic pulses fired from space. The new film has a leaner streak, and the high-tech attack methods are as follows: drowning your enemy in the washbasin of a men's room; throttling him in a hotel stairwell; and, best of all, chasing him through a construction site.

This chase goes on far longer than expected, like a theological discussion in a Bergman film, with both the fleeing baddie and the pursuant Bond careening off walls and cranes and anything else that juts into their path. Rather than zipping through some customized hideout beneath the waves, decked out with nuclear reactors and sharks, they are merely making the best of their environment. Could this be something new in movies: green violence? It looked pretty natural to me, with Bond forever getting nicked and bruised. "Casino Royale" is allegedly the first 007 saga to feature rain, and Craig is the first proper bleeder, standing in front of a bathroom mirror and contemplating his own downpour. (Look how he swallows a Scotch to numb the hurt, and then try to imagine the Roger Moore equivalent—the pensive sip, the appreciative smile at the distiller's art.) This is still Bond, however, so the next scene finds him sliding into his seat at the poker table, in a bloodless white shirt; indeed, if my math is correct, he goes through three freshly ironed dress shirts in a single night, which suggests that he has off-loaded Q in favor of a silent Jeeves. Also, he has to look good for Vesper Lynd.

Miss Lynd is an accountant, employed by Her Majesty's Government, and, just as "The Spy Who Loved Me" is said to have burnished the sales figures for Lotus sports cars, so "Casino Royale" should transform accountancy into the most erotically charged of the professions. (There is one horrific attempt at product placement, and I hereby propose an international ban on Omega watches.) Vesper is played by Eva Green, who retains from her role in Bertolucci's "The Dreamers" an unnerving blend of the fleshly and the spectral, and one thing she definitely is not is a Bond girl. Vesper is a Bond woman—a Bond Lady of Shalott, I would say, with all the sufferings of the world reflected in her dark-shadowed eyes. Her skin is paper-pale and her lips are vampirically red, as if she hadn't slept in a hundred years, although, whatever has been keeping her awake, it isn't sex. She is the only woman with whom 007 partakes of coitus interruptus, and even that takes two hours to bring off. For a Bond picture, "Casino Royale" is amazingly short on lust. There is a moment when our hero lands in the Bahamas and glances over his shoulder at a couple of flirters in tennis gear, but Craig looks so embarrassed, almost insulted, by such levity that the experiment is never repeated. Bodies, it would seem, exist to be abused, not caressed, and Campbell takes care to incorporate, straight from the novel, a sequence in which Bond is denuded and tortured, with particular attention being paid to his organs of desire. Poor fellow. If Pussy Galore showed up, he'd pour her a saucer of milk.

Things have been so moribund for so long in the Bond business that it was always going to take some major defibrillation to jerk it back to life. "Die Another Day," the last film, was a gruelling nadir, although the producers would be right to point out that it earned four hundred and fifty million dollars, which is three times the purse that Bond and Le Chiffre battle for at the tables. This means that the sight of Pierce Brosnan driving an invisible car, though bound to dismay every Bond-revering adult, was catnip to the larger constituency of teen-age boys, who were comfortable with a film that felt like a video game. What they will make of "Casino Royale"—no babes, no toyland, and the poker not even online—is anyone's guess, but the earnings of the new film will doubtless affect the look, and the casting, of the next. If Craig falters, then I guess it's full speed ahead to Chris Rock as 007 and Borat as Blofeld. That would be a shame, because "Casino Royale," though half an hour too long, is the first semi-serious stab at Fleming, and at the treacherous terrain that he marked out, since "On Her Majesty's Secret Service," in 1969. Like that film, this one ends in despair.

To be precise, it ends with Daniel Craig wearing a dark-blue three-piece suit and toting a machine gun, which is the best, though not the most cost-effective, way to overcome despair that he can think of. The name Le Chiffre means "the cipher," but, once the stage is bare, it is Bond who remains the enigma—as unbreakable to the cryptographer as to the torturer, and even to himself. Raymond Chandler once challenged Fleming in a letter, saying, "I think you will have to make up your mind what kind of a writer you are going to be. You could be almost anything except that I think you are a bit of a sadist!" As with Fleming, so with his creation: the fledgling Bond of "Casino Royale" has yet to make up his mind what kind of a man he is going to be. The cruelty he can manage, with ease; what he still lacks is the license to live. Hence the scene in which, flush with winnings, he shares a late supper with Vesper, as if hoping to dine himself into being a gentleman. Even his grainy features are flattered by the soft lighting, and, savoring the mood, he pays his companion a wooing compliment, then blows it by adding, "I thought that was quite a good line." Even James Bond, in other words, wants to be 007. Join the club. ♦

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Volume LXXXII, No. 38, November 20, 2006. The New Yorker (ISSN 0028-792X) is published weekly (except for five combined issues: Jan. 23 & 30, Feb. 13 & 20, July 10 & 17, Aug. 7 & 14, Dec. 25 & Jan. 1) by The Condé Nast Publications, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: The Condé Nast Building, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. Louis Cona, vice-president and publisher; Jamie Engel, associate publisher; Alatia Bradley, advertising director; Karen Quinn-Panzer, advertising director; Melissa McCarthy Strome, advertising director; Judy Safir, director of finance and business operations; Daniella Wells, executive director marketing & strategic planning; Janine Silvera, executive director of creative services; Jacqueline Cinguina, director of integrated marketing; Steve Porter, creative director/advertising; Ellen Reid, creative services director; Lynn Oberlander, general counsel. Advance Magazine Publishers Inc.: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Charles H. Townsend, president and C.E.O.; John W. Bellando, executive vice-president and C.O.O.; Jill Bright, executive vice-president–human resources; John Buese, executive vice-president–chief information officer; David Orlin, senior vice-president–strategic sourcing; Robert Bennis, senior vice-president–real estate; Maurie Perl, senior vice-president–chief communications officer. Shared services provided by Advance Magazine Group: Steven T. Florio, Advance Magazine Group vice chairman; David B. Chemidlin, senior vice-president–general manager, shared services center. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. R123242885. Canada Post return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: P.O. Box 874, Station Main, Markham, ON L3P 8L4.

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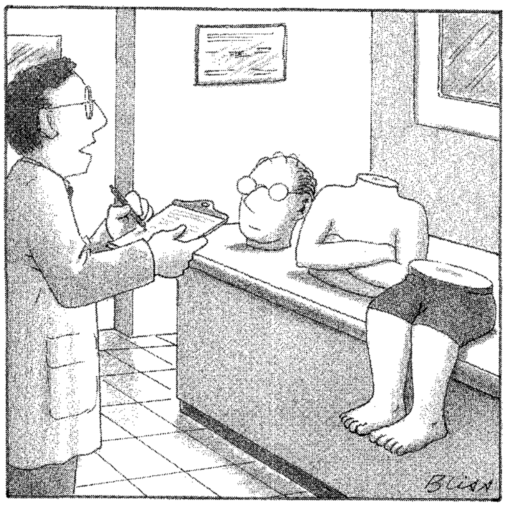
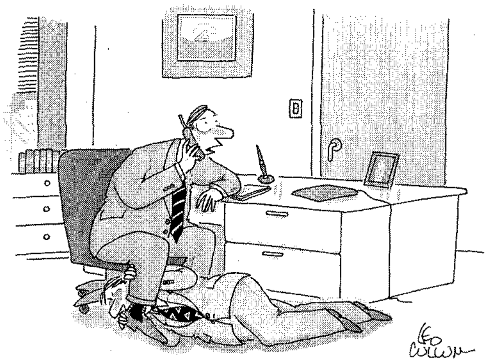
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Mick Stevens, must be received by Sunday, November 19th. Finalists in the November 6th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the December 4th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"This is the most advanced case of Surrealism I've seen."
Eric Sagalyn, Worcester, Mass.



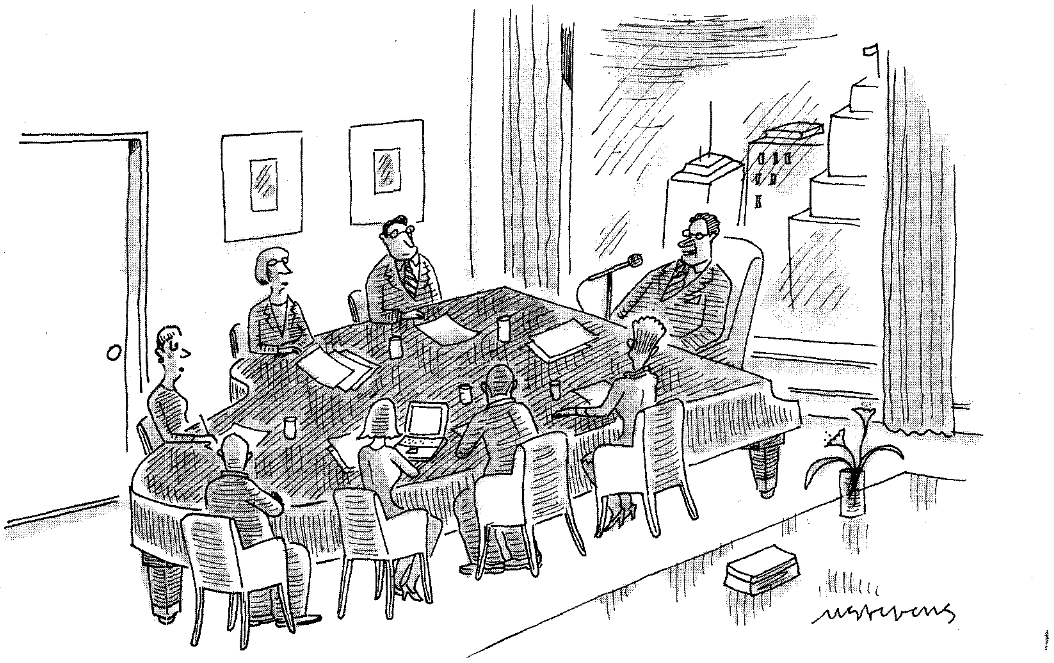
THE FINALISTS

"Mom, tell Kevin to quit biting."
R. M. Keller, New York City

"Carol, let's go ahead and keep the job posted for a little while longer."
Colin Nissan, Brooklyn, N.Y.

"No, it's more of a gnawing . . ."
Robert Osborn, Iowa City, Iowa

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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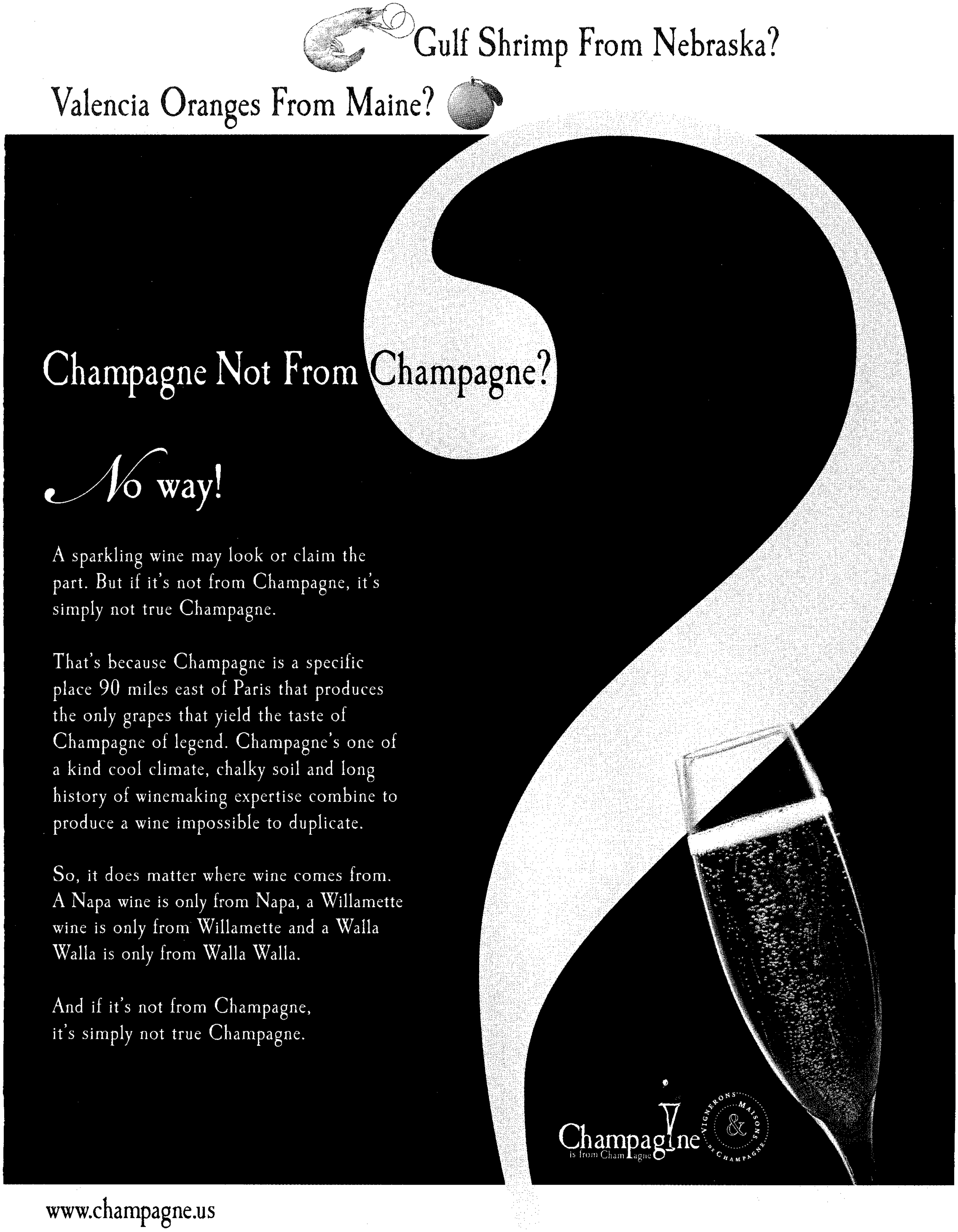

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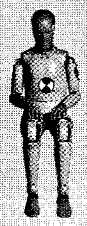

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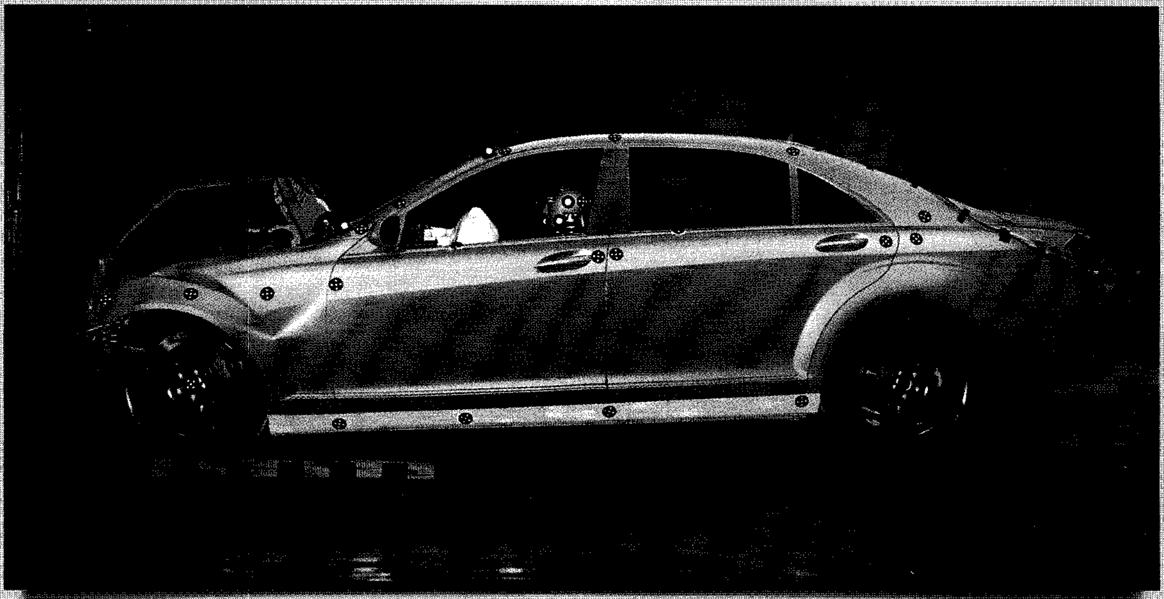

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